

THE
TEN WOODMEN

OF

OZ

The Oz Book for 1999

**Founded On and Continuing
the Oz Stories by**

March Laumer

This book is for me Mum:
still the one I love the most
and in memory of my dear Dad

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C H A P T E R O N E

The Tin Woodman spent the day in bed.

It was too bad, really. After all, it was meant to be a day of glamor, even glory! The hundredth anniversary of his ascent to the Imperial Throne! Actually, the throne was just a kitchen chair, painted egg-yolk yellow—for the tireless woodman had never needed to sit down; if anyone wanted an audience they could just walk up and talk to him.)

Yes, it was a hundred years since the grateful Winkies had elected him to rule over them and he'd been doing it ever since. Conditions in most parts of Oz had begun to stabilize from that time, about a century before, and since then almost everywhere it had been decided peaceably who ruled who. Oh, there had been one attempt to depose Nick Chopper as Emperor but it had all come right in the end, and now he stood in the nimbus of legend and pageantry as Oz's longest-crowned crowned head. Even Princess Ozma was an upstart by comparison. Her reign had only begun four years after Nick was comfortably installed in his tin palace at the fair tin and yellow town of Winkiezia.

'Lay in the nimbus', rather. It *was* tiresome. He'd been hoping and planning to be still more or less ambulatory for the occasion as late as six weeks ago when he himself had attended the gala celebrations in honor of the centenary of the famous

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Scarecrow's descent from his pole (or family tree^s) in the Munchkin farmer's corn-field.

That had been an occasion. Everyone in Oz of any importance had attended, and since the event coincided with the straw man's second inauguration as president of the Munchkins the majesty of the situation can well be imagined. Princess Dorothy, obviously, and her young husband were there, she as virtual co-star of the production. The Courageous Lion had come (leaving his numerous family at home). Queen Ozma and the Wizard, together as always, had attended. Queen Glinda too; yes, the wise witch of the South had been apotheosized at last—and of course that made Sples Smith prince-consort (as "Earl Saladin"). The Fruakxes were there. The Mankato-Gales. The Delphias. Trot and Betsy and *their* husbands. Oh, the list of celebrities who had gathered was virtually endless. Everyone agreed there had never been so many of the famous assembled all at once before, even at Ozma's Palace of Magic. And when the Emperor of the Winkies was wheeled in the applause and excitement had reached the apogee.

Everyone was sorry he had to be wheeled. Now, after all, chairs were being found to be useful to him. Maybe he'd better get him a wheelthrone after all, thought the tin man wryly. In the past year those who lived near him daily had got used to the sight of the seated monarch. The poor Woodman had got *so* frail that he had to conserve, not his strength, but his substance, where he could.

When Dorothy had pushed his chair to within five yards of the dais where Pres. Scarecrow was standing, taking the congratulations of the multitude, Nick gripped the handholds and thrust himself to his feet. Creakingly he stalked to the blue-suited straw man and they fell into each other's arms. Nick made no effort now to control his tears. Where was the sense of worrying about rusted jaws when your hips were so far corroded that your legs threatened to break off at any moment?

Now for the first time in a century it was the obligation of

§ See *The Royal Book of Oz*. Editor's Note.

the *Scarecrow* to support his tin friend. He could do that because latterly, accepting a useful piece of outer-world technology, he had had a rudimentary plastic skeleton inserted inside his clothes and straw. The straw man knew for the first time—and delighted in!—some of the resiliency and freedom of action of other creatures. He could pick up something! heavier than a flower head or a butterfly.

(It is true that in the first chronicle of Oz the Scarecrow is represented by both historian and illustrator as having helped equally, with Nick Chopper, to pick up and carry both Dorothy and her dog, but we must assume that that was a mere courtesy and cordial deception by the two creators and that it was the man of metal alone who bore ninety percent of the weight. A mere flimsy figure of straw, whom the little girl herself had been able to lift down from his pole with no exertion, could never have been able, in turn, to pick *her* up.)

Now the fragile Woodman could lean on his friend and cry and that friend could, with just a *little* effort, bear the weight—for just a moment. Then the tin man fell back into his chair and dried his tears—and nobody knew really if he was crying because of sentimental nostalgia or at the grief of the falling away of all things. Still, before they left that evening to carry him back to his capital, he assured the Scarecrow that he was looking forward to receiving him in somewhat more than a month's time at the tin castle—what there was left of it. "My physicians—my mechanics, I should say," he related, "are going to try a new treatment on me. They can't restore the wasted tissue, of course, but they think they have a process for applying a kind of diamond paste and baking it onto me, that will, as it were, substitute for what's eaten away and perhaps be even stronger."

Alas: the process produced, indeed, a diamond-hard shell that was resistant to everything; it just wouldn't *adhere* to anything but itself. In the grueling process of its application the decayed substance of the Tin Woodman's hips broke utterly and he was rendered legless.

Now a vital question for the first time had to be faced

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earnestly that had somehow never arisen before in the magic land. It was: how much of a magically living being could you replace without the being's losing its magic life and becoming just a pile of junk?

The problem had come *near* being posed, at times, in the case of the genial Scarecrow. His flimsy construction made it imperative now and then for substitutions to be made. Naturally these were piecemeal; if they pulled out his straw to renew it with fresh, the life of the man remained in his head and clothes until they could get him back together again, stuffed. If a boot grew just too worn-out or the jacket too awfully tatty for a president to be seen in, it could very simply be replaced by another. There was even a traumatic occasion or two when his brilliant brain had been taken out to be sifted and aired—and the head was still alive when the seat of his intellect was restored to it. Yet you couldn't throw away the sum total of the Scarecrow and expect that an all-at-once brand new one in his place was going to live or be the beloved personality of old. There clearly had to be a continuity. But what was the hairline that made the division between viable continuity and non-continuity?

In the present case *all* of the poor Tin Woodman was at risk. All of him would have to be replaced if he were to walk again as the gleaming silvery figure so long familiar. The tin man went along with the idea that you could attach fresh arms and legs that would be as good as the old but he refused to credit that he could ever feel at home in a wholly new head—and as for a replacement heart in a substitute body? He flatly declined to consider it.

So he lay in bed now, though with no need to say, "Where's the rest of me?" He could see the rest of him, neatly folded and laid on a chair by the wall, so that he could look that way now and then and reassure himself that he still had his legs; owned them, if not in actual bodily possession of them, as it were. Only when visitors came to see him was a large yellow silk kerchief laid decently over the legs that callers might not see the dread ravages of his disease.

“Tin,” Dr. Dorothy Choggolak (as she now was) had said. They had been sitting side by side in Nick’s tin lizzie as Zip made the yellow, bullet version of a scalawagon flash through the burnt-orange late-summer twilight. “I read up on it a bit. The most noteworthy characteristic of the metal tin is that it is non-corroding. So I just don’t understand how this could have happened to you, Nick dear.”

Nick’s jaws creaked as he tried to grin. “And yet your own very first impression of my tin and me was of rust, dear Dorothy,” said he.

“Yes,” the young woman agreed. “I didn’t know enough at the time to be surprised. Now I do... *aren’t* you made of tin?”

“Good gracious, no.” The Woodman’s merriment was hearty despite the parlous state of his health and the physical difficulty of talking through a corroded throat. “‘Tin’ is just an expression—in such phrases as ‘tin can’, ‘tin hat’, ‘tin whistle’. What is meant is ‘tin alloy’ or ‘tin plating’. Pure tin is impractical. Think of tin foil! If I were made of that...!”

“Oh, but that’s so thin. If it was just thicker, as thick as your... skin is...”

“I still couldn’t stand up. My own weight would make me crumple and collapse—to the accompaniment of the ‘cry of tin’.”

“‘Cry’?”

“That characteristic creaking, crackling, rattling noise that comes from tin when it is bent. The fact that I used to rust proves I’m made of plated *steel*—with, incidentally, a good deal of zinc in the composition.”

“And yet you haven’t *rusted* exactly now.” Dorothy was still puzzled.

“Oh, no, after I got myself nickel-plated that problem wasn’t any longer so troublesome. I’ve always been extra careful to keep dry. Only dampness, not to mention outright moisture, causes the oxidation that produces rust.”

“Then how...?”

Yes, that’s what Nick Chopper thought about all the time now. The how.

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He was thinking of it when the first callers were announced of the many who would come today. This was of course a deputation of the palace staff, led by his adjutant Ojo the Lucky and the cook Lewdoed. They all came wearing artificially merry faces, faces that lost their smiles when they caught sight of the hastily draped legs on the chair. They just couldn't get used to the idea of a bed-ridden ruler. They babbled their congratulations and deposited their bouquets and backed out of the room, just feeling so bad.

And so the long day began.

C H A P T E R T W O

The Careleaver Kids were furious.

Of course their fury had been cooking up slowly over quite a number of years, starting first with mystification, then going on to disappointment, and then to frustration and renewed efforts and crashing failure and now, genuinely, outright rage.

"So, all right, what do we do about it?" asked Molly Coddle in high dudgeon.

"We've tried everything we can do on our own," reminded Sam Aritan.

"Yeah, and none of it worked," sniffed Mel Iffluos.

"No," agreed his constant companion Sarah Nade .

The rest of the crowd nodded their heads vigorously, though not so much as to knock off any petals. Everybody was in agreement but nobody came up with any saving suggestion until little Sue Veneer piped up in her tiny voice: "We could ask Glinda..."

Well, the obviousness of that struck everyone at once and Artie Fishel said with a humph, "We should have thought of that years ago."

"I did," said Ella Fant. "I thought of it and then I thought, 'So we set out to consult the good witch. It'll take years. By the time our Virginia creepers get through crawling to see her, the situation will already have solved itself, somehow—or they'll

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have died on the way.”

“Died’!?” echoed Mary Neight, shocked. “You forget where you are, dear. Nothing ever dies in Oz.”

“Well, you know what I mean; our process of withering and renewal. Let’s face it; even in Oz the same tulip blossom doesn’t stand there decade after decade.”

“Never mind that,” broke in Lou Gubrius impatiently. “Obviously we’d send the rambling roses. They might wander a bit but in time they’d get there. And they can be pretty fast on their stems when they want to be.”

“Hooray!” cried all the Kids, well, most of them. And they began to light out in the direction of the rosery—until Beau Nuss called them all to attention authoritatively.

“Waida minute!” he cried. “Why wait around for the roses to ramble there lackadaisically? Why don’t we go ourselves?”

The crowd stopped, turned, stared at each other, and grew deadly pale—as pale as plant people can get without actually wilting. “Good Garden!” exclaimed some of them, aghast. “You mean *leave*... go out of... the Charmed Garden? ourselves!?”

“But that’s fatal!” stammered Vera Lent. “Isn’t it?”

The crowd stopped looking pale and just looked interested. “Well,” said Will Ingley, “we’ve just established—say, *re-established*—that nothing is fatal in Oz. One can cut off one’s own head and kick it around for a football, and not die. But I’ve always understood that if we Careleavers dared venture out beyond the Garden Wall, we’d droop and pine and—well, just not be our real selves.”

“You know what?” said Anne O’Dine. “I’ll bet you that’s just propaganda put about to keep us from straying away from our duty as Careleavers. Has anyone ever *tried* leaving the Garden?”

They talked about it for hours and agreed that in floral memory there had never been a case of a resident plant’s venturing outside the Charmed Garden of Oz. Not as far as any of them had ever heard about. For daisies don’t keep diaries nor ranuncles chronicles.

So they tried it. Anyway it was no worse than staying where

they were. If they stayed where they were they'd "die" anyway — or, since death isn't allowed in Oz they'd be so sick and miserable they'd *wish* they were dead, though the wish be denied them. At least if they took to the road they'd be trying to do something about it.

And of course it wasn't "the road". Roads are the one place plants don't take to. When the Kids lit out they went straight across the fields in a bee-line. They had an old battered map of Oz so they knew pretty well which way to go. Only now and then they were forced onto a road—for the sake of its bridge—but they soon strayed from it again.

"Who shall go?" they said at the start. Every twig went up. "Well, we can't *all* go!" they exclaimed. So they left half of them behind to carry on the careleaving in the Garden and the rest all crowded out the famous ornamental gates and set off in a body.

It was really very charming to see the phalanx of plants moving purposefully across a blacky-green field or infiltrating a dark forest. With their bright-flowering—and only partly blight-spotted—heads it wasn't hard to keep them in view, so none of them lost touch with the main body of the pilgrims. The leggier plants moderated their speed to match that of the slower hikers; thus there wasn't too much trouble with stragglers.

Perhaps the worst problem they had was with well-wishers. People would see a crowd of panting pansies or pooped-out poppies and want to stop them and put them up for the night in their flower beds. "We'll just rest a minute," the travelers would say, "but flowers don't sleep, you know. The morning glories may act like they do, except in the morning but they're not the norm. Stopping to 'sleep' would just be losing our time. And we've got to get on to Glinda the Good."

"What for?" said the well-wishers.

"Well, look around you!" cried Al Luviul. "the world is eight shades darker just since as far back as I can remember. And it's getting worse. New plants can't get a start, the air and the soil are so poisoned. In our native garden there are huge bare patches

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where nothing will grow — and getting huger daily. That ol' noise has gotta cease," he ended dramatically, using a colloquialism of sixty years before.

"Hm, yes, we see what you mean," said the well-wishers. "The problem's been pretty bad for us humans too. Harvests are nothing like what they used to be, and there's so much waste from contamination — and... well, the earth just isn't as pretty a place as it once was."

"But," said the well-wishers' wives, "we figured it wasn't our place to complain. We know Princess Ozma's doing the best she can. She's sent a care package to every household in Oz, with pills and things to take against radiation and other poisoning. So nobody's really been sick. And you can't expect her to do anything about the weather!"

"No, of course not," said their eldest sons. "After all, the Princess isn't a god — goddess, I mean — though some people do sometimes act as if she is." The eldest sons were the bookish type and knew well what kind of reputation their girl ruler had been getting, out in the great world, during the last twenty years.

"But after all," summed up Frank N. Cense, "we can't just leave it at that. At least we plant people can't. It's worse for us."

"And you think Glinda...?"

"Yes," said Maude Lynn; "if anybody can help it's the great Sorceress of the South. She's the wisest person in Oz. We'll simply remind her about the cleanness and healthfulness and beauty that once were Oz's. She's just forgotten them... I guess. And we'll remind her. Tomorrow — or next day — she'll think of some way to get them back. After all, tomorrow is another day."

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

The buildings of the University of Oz had by now grown grey—not to say black—with age. Or, to be truthful, if the brickwork was going black, it was not so much age that was doing it. Normally the ivy that covered the bricks would just be a rich dark green, particularly in the Emerald country of Oz, but these ivy leaves were all a ghastly metallic grey. However, the buildings *were* old. They'd soon be putting out stamps to commemorate the centenary of the College of Sports, as the highest-ranking institution of learning in the land was rather frivolously called at its first founding.

In those days the powers that were had wanted to do two things: to make fun of such institutions of higher learning as being just glorified sports clubs where the winning of a football game against West Kentucky Christian was much more important than any academic triumphs. Also, they wanted to please children by presenting a school where all hard industry and dedication were done away with and study depicted as a game. One simply took pills. that produced knowledge, and all the rest was just ice cream sodas, if not beer and skittles.

It hadn't proved good enough. There were no other colleges in Oz—nor yet across the deserts in other lands of faerie. The academic, the intellectual, was never catered for in the concep-

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tion of those magic lands, and the one college they had was only dreamed up as a venue for the popular self-appointed "Professor" Wogglebug. The result was that there was nobody for the College to compete against in sports!

The eventual upshot was that the student body at the College of Sports fell back, for occupation, on studies out of sheer boredom. The clever ones, of whom there were quite a number, actually began to take an interest. The first time a student asked a question of their professor that he hadn't a clue about he blushed yellow (that was the color of a Winkie insect's ichor) and straightway resolved to get an education, not just pretend to one.

Certainly there were books enough in the college library; wished there through magic by the wand of the fairy ruler Ozma. Unfortunately it soon became evident to the questing Wogglebug that planning in the administrative section of faerie left something to be desired. Ozma had probably wished something like "Let the library of the new College of Sports be fully stocked with books." It wasn't for Ozma, who, so far as was known, had never read one, to specify *which* books.

Wells The library was now found to contain Godey's *Ladies' Book* complete, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, *The Dunciad* of Pope, a first edition of *Through the Looking Glass*, Bowdler's *Shakespeare*, the complete works of Ethel M. Dell, four hundred volumes in Swahili and a hundred and fifty in Italian, and a complete run of *The Times's* of London and New York from the period of their founding to 1903.

Prof. Wogglebug began at the upper left corner of the remotest shelves and read the library through. That took him thirty years, not overdoing it. At the end of the period he sought and gained Queen Ozma's permission to change the name of the institution to the "College of Knowledge". *Sports* now became the only discipline that was taught by pills. Book-learning was once more to come from actual book learning. The professor had tried it and found it to be not too bad a method. Granted it was time-consuming. But in Oz they had all the time in the world. Why

not *take* time? and get a thorough grounding.

H.M. Wogglebug, T.E., conferred upon himself the title of Doctor Emeritus. After that he preferred to be known as "Dr. Em." Wogglebug. Other graduates followed thick and fast, faculties proliferated, the plant expanded vastly, so that Princess/Queen Ozma, coming once on a state visit, said to the greatly pleased Doctor, "This isn't just a college any more, Professor. It's a University." And such, from that very day, it was.

Dr. Em. Wogglebug designed the university crest himself. Some parts of its branching pattern strangely resembled insect antennae, while the central shield was striped in gold and white. Underneath was the legend "Entomos est veritas."

But what about that library, the great gaps in which the professor was by now all too much aware of? They might hand out degrees on the basis of the jumble of information one could get from reading bound volumes of the *Edinburgh Chronicle* 1774-1823 but it wasn't consequential advanced learning. The Wogglebug became a true intellectual snob, rating learning over all else, and was unhappy because his graduates couldn't *really* do anything academic that was important.

"Princess Ozma," he said, having made in person a journey into town and to the Palace of Magic, "may I be allowed to go into the world outside and order in the books we need so badly at the University?"

Ozma was rather taken aback. Despite the letting down of frontier barriers in the course of the twentieth century, with resultant near-swarving of outlanders into Oz (as well as a certain amount of travel, also in the opposite direction), she was at bottom suspicious of intercourse between the two worlds. Oz was Oz just because it was remote from everything in the humdrum world of reality. If it were to become a trippers' haunt as accessible as Acapulco or Ierapetra, where would be the magic of it? And if you didn't want contamination from strangers in Oz you didn't really want it being brought *back* into Oz by natives either.

Still, she let him go. His motive was a noble one and after all

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one didn't want to prevent the *learning* of the great world from reaching the smaller, magic one. Since no one else in Oz was even remotely to be compared with the professor in acquaintance with what volumes (and other equipment) were wanted, it had to be he who went—if any one.

"But a wogglebug out in the great world?" protested the princess. "Is such a thing feasible?" Even the girl ruler, after so many decades, had got into the way of thinking that magic, and the results of it, couldn't function outside the magical continent of Sempernunquam and its immediate environs.

"Good heavens, your majesty," cried the doctor emeritus, whose memory for trifles was no doubt better trained than his sovereign's, "don't you recall that I myself had a success-filled sojourn in America soon after our adventures aboard the flying Gump?"

Ozma's brow creased just slightly. "Why, yes, of course..."

"The time I fell in love with the Wagnerian plaid?" the professor reminisced. "I still have my living room suite at home upholstered in it—just to remind me."

"Dear me, yes," concurred the ruler. "And though there was a prat-fall or two, so I understood, still you did return to Oz all in one piece and no worse for the experience."

"And a bit wiser," bragged the bug.

"But tell me," said Ozma, "how did people react when they saw a six-foot wogglebug approaching them? I mean; wogglebugs are unknown in America, so I believe."

"Oh, they simply assessed me as a common or garden beetle—a bit out-size—but then they just figured I was from Texas, so that was all right."

"Well, good," exhaled the ruler.

"Oh, one or two thought I was an earwig," added the insect, being perfectly truthful. "And one rude fellow said 'Cockroach'."

"That *was* rude," concurred the princess and laughed merrily. Then she grew grave again. "I wonder, though, if this time you wouldn't care to be disguised a bit. In view of your important mission, you see. You wouldn't want people hesitat-

ing before conferring with you on serious matters, I know.”

The professor thought that over. Of course he was inordinately proud of his unique—if not shape, at least size. Actually, it was the combination of shape *and* size that was so different. He couldn’t imagine that others would ever fail to be as impressed as himself.

In her own mind the fairy princess was following his line of thought. People *were* going to be impressed. And then, “Zoos,” she warned softly.

“Zoos?” echoed the wogglebug, all perplex.

“Or at least; A zoo.”

“You don’t mean—! Your majesty’s not hinting—!?”

“Well, yes, I’m afraid I am,” confessed Ozma. “Let’s face it; you’re a unique bug. Those Americans: you know what they are; they want to own the biggest and best. Could they see you and not want to deprive you of your liberty by—er, imprisoning you in a menagerie?”

The danger was real and the professor recognized it. He’d have broken out now in a cold sweat—if insects *could* sweat—to think how he’d avoided that fate in 1904. But *then* America was not yet the zealous leader in all scientific and scholarly pursuits that it had since become. He wouldn’t be able to walk down Broadway *now* without being apprehended and hustled off to confinement—or anyway mugged. What to do?

“Easy,” said Ozma. “I’ll cast a spell over you—not to turn you into another shape you could be awkward in or unhappy with - but just so that you’ll *look*, to anyone in the world outside, like an ordinary inoffensive un-surprising-appearing scholar.”

So that’s what she did.

C H A P T E R F O U R

The first arrivals from abroad were of course Nick's oldest friends, Dorothy and the Scarecrow. Well, actually Nick Chopper had older friends than that; during the day his ex-fiancée Nimmi Aimee arrived with her husband to pay their respects. Even if the girl had chosen another in preference to the woodman who'd turned into tin, there was no outright disaffection between the former couple. Anyway Nimmi was just human enough to delight in the gala occasion of a trip abroad and a reception by royalty—even if she did 'know him when'.

Arid yes, there was another friend who antedated the Emperor's traveling companions of a century before. He too arrived in the afternoon, long after the bittersweet reunion of Dorothy and the Scarecrow with their comrade was past. This was the tinsmith (let's face it; the tin-*plate*-smith) who had first set Nick Chopper's replacement legs on the path to fame and fortune.

Stan Ferrum had had a great success in his chosen line of work after the ascendance of his product, the Tin Woodman. The curiously built forester's brilliant rise to glory had made metal limbs all the rage for a time. Though nobody was so careless—or, as Nick himself claimed, bewitched—as to cut off

his own extremities in the desire to get prosthetes of sheet metal, still, when a disabling accident did happen, many men (somehow ladies didn't take to it) requested the replacement of missing parts with metal ones. Captain Fyter was the example who gained greatest renown, sharing^s as he did an adventure with the tin emperor himself. In time, however, a good deal of the captain's thunder was stolen by tin milkmen, tin postmen, tin icemen, tin dustmen, tin doormen, tin footmen, and tin firemen who came to the Munchkin tinsmith maimed and went away wholly metal.

Now here was Stan Ferrum come all the way from his rural village in Munchkinland to hail his famous protégé one hundred and one years after the great replacement. In his company was a whole platoon of tin people and great was the noise of clinking and crickling as they jostled for positions around the celebratory emperor's sickbed.

"But, your highness!" they cried in consternation, "we had no idea! Is it...? it isn't... ! EYDS^{ss}?"

"Mmm, I'm afraid so," murmured the invalid and plucked a little at the coverlet. "Just like yourselves. I see there's not a one of you either but—"

"You're right," put in their spokesman, who was none other than Capt. Fyter himself. "We've all been attacked - and it's an attack there's no repulsing. Not when the very air is charged with the destroyer! But we thought it was only disfiguring.

The grey patches *look* awful. We'd no idea it could go beyond that...!"

"I fear so," confirmed the Woodman quietly. "I'll tell you my theory. As you rightly say, it's in the air. Here, as in very many parts of the world, the prevailing winds are westerly. Bearing their great loads of impurities, they come from the west across the great desert. The Winkie country is the first to suffer from the winds' unloading of their filth. But, Oz itself being pure, the winds and clouds gather no further grime as they blow across

§ See *The Tin Woodman of Oz*

§§ Electroplated yeoman's disease of the skin. Editor's notes.

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the country and so are marginally cleaner by the time they reach you in Munchkinland. Perhaps not much; just the difference between life and destruction." And here the Emperor shed a single regretful tear.

The tin men were silent. There seemed nothing to say. It was a shock for them to here be witnesses of the dissolution that in time awaited themselves. It was no good protesting that "something ought to be done about it". Obviously the both intelligent and powerful tin ruler would have done something about it if there had been anything about it to be done.

In the midst of their silent consternation a new delegation of visitors was announced. "Your Majesty," said Palace Steward Ojo, "a deputation from the Noble Order of Woodmen of the World."

Then entered they. First, two men in red, wearing the bow tie and spats that had become traditional in Oz for woodcutters since the time when the future Emperor of the Winkies made them famous.

Dorothy had once asked her friend why he wore those garments on going into the forest to chop trees. The tin man would have blushed if he could. "It—it was the tinsmith's fault," he stammered and was not exactly truthful. "Once they were soldered on I couldn't get them off."

"But, Nick," protested the logical-minded Kansas girl, "why would he have chosen those articles of apparel for you? They aren't at all typical of Munchkins in general. Why, I suppose no one would put on spats unless he was trying to look *very* fashionable." (This was said in 1909.)

Nick blushed an even deeper shade of nickel.

"Now, Dorothy," he reproached. "I'm not a vain man. It says so right there on page 127^s."

"How very odd," said Dorothy thoughtfully, and remained puzzled. She did not forget the little passage, however, and on this very day, at Chopper's centenary reception, she made occasion to ask Stan Ferrum the tinsmith what he had had in

§ See *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Editor's note.

mind when he thus costumed in perpetuity the modest tin man.

“Gosh, don’t ask me, Doctor,” said the man respectfully. “When the Woodman came to me, hopping the mile or two from the woods on one leg, I simply matched up on the new left metal leg what I saw he was wearing on the right.”

“Oh, Nick, the old darling!” cried Dorothy, knowing at last after all these years just how dandyish the Tin Woodman had in fact really been. “He was felling trees, wearing spats!?”

“And a bow tie,” added the tinsmith, “and his smartest Eton jacket.”

“But what in the world...?”

“In his agony, the time he chopped his body in two, I heard him murmur the name of Miss Nimmi Aimee. I think he realized then, too late, that when the last of his natural body went...”

Dorothy was silent, in awe. “He was doing it to impress *her*,” she breathed. “In case Nimmi Aimee came along while he was cutting trees, he had to be well groomed.” Perhaps she had never realized before just how deeply smitten Chopper had been—until he chopped away the heart that did the loving.

An ancient vanity then—or let us say, a, desperate desire to impress favorably a lady fair—had dictated what would be worn on this day of all days by the two red-velvet-suited woodcutters from the land of the Quadlings as they entered the sick-room and marched to Nick Chopper’s bedside.

A similar outfit in purple was worn by two men who came after: woodmen from the woodsiest region of Oz, the northern land of the Gillikins. Two yellow-attired men appeared next. From the smaller lands of Oz, the orange and the green, came one delegate each, for in truth those two principalities were relatively lacking in forests. Finally strode in two fellows in blue jackets and spats, Munchkin woodcutters, the role of one of whom might have been taken by Nicholas Chopper himself a century before.

With the crowd of tin men the newcomers formed a big ‘U’ around the patient’s bed. They stared gravely at the Tin

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Woodman and then burst into tears. This wasn't at all what they had been expecting. The Emperor himself, never slow to weep, joined the chorus. Afterwards he mopped his face a bit desultorily. When your legs have corroded off, who cares about a little creaking of the jaws?

Waldo Baumschneider, of the Unnikeg Baumschneiders, was the first to break the noise. "Your highness," he gasped, "what is the meaning of it all?"

"Meaning'?" snuffled Nick. "Hardly any 'meaning', I should think."

"Well, cause," returned Baumsehneider. "How does it happen that we find you seemingly totally incapacitated? We heard nothing—"

"No, the final breakdown only took place day before yesterday. There was no time to send word and cancel the—er, melancholy occasion."

Legno Tagliabosco of Quadlinga took up the word: "But what can have brought Your Majesty so low?" he wanted to know. "This is Oz and things like this can't happen! No one can die!" he protested excitedly.

"No, but they can be destroyed," reminded the imperial invalid. "That's what's happening to me."

"But by what?" insisted Albero Boscaiolo, the other Quadling.

"Pollution," answered the Tin Woodman starkly.

C H A P T E R F I V E

The delegation of plants made its way slowly southward. It only took a few months. Legged plants unique to Oz, the result of accouplement (carried out frightfully discreetly, practically *in vitro*) by plants with humans, were able to live divorced from the soil. They were ambulatory but in virtually every other respect were fully vegetal. Hence they had constantly to stop and put down a feeder root to have a guzzle of soil nutrients—and the time they spent drinking was unbelievable. On the other hand, they loved the rain, and yet could stay outdoors for unlimited amounts of time in the unbroken sunshine, and they never needed to sleep. Now they made steady progress onward, though slow. The sunflowers could have galloped on ahead but they waited politely for the violets and forgetmenots to trip daintily and diminutively along beside them.

The plants had been under weigh for two and a half weeks when the expedition suffered its first major delay. A party of catmint suddenly set up a wail, and before the rest of the-traveling multitude knew what was happening a puthy cat came bounding from the deep grass on a hill slope and landed square among the shuddering blue flowerlets.

“Help, help!” screamed the mint flowers as down they went under the delighted paws and body of the cat. The cat was

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all set to enjoy itself, and it didn't mean any harm. Cats don't actually destroy the catmint, they just love the smell, and to roll in it and be *with* it. Oh, they might desultorily chew a few stalks, but it isn't the *taste* of it, you know, it's the odor.

Well, this pussy (called Aloysius Pussy) got a f right. Never before had it know catmint to fight back. It fled incontinently up the hill to a custard cottage on the top.

There, it would seem, the pussy had a conference with its owners, for in a moment the green jelly door flew open again and two young children came running down the slope. Running in every sense of the word. These, you see, were the Sticky Twins, also known as Dot and Tot at the time of their adventures in Merryland [See the appropriately titled volumes. E.n.] and as Twink and Tom during their travels with the Shaggy Man, in mid-century. Now they were living in retreat under the names of Fweetie and Thyugar and trying to go straight. So far they hadn't had much success and when, as now, they got excited they didn't need to take a step in order to melt and run all over the place.

When they had run down the slope to where the Careleaver Kids stood nodding in the breeze and staring curiously, Fweetie said, "Oh, how pretty!"

And Thyugar echoed, "So thweet! "

Anne Drogeny said, "You mean us?"

"Yeth," gushed Thyugar. "You're just the sweetest things!"

"You look pretty sweet yourself," remarked Ella Mentle. "Isn't that icing on your heads? And if I'm not mistaken you're dressed in syrup...?"

"Yeth," assented Fweetie. "We've been trying to clean up our act but it hasn't been easy. Up till now Aloysius has had to do the cleaning up for us." Indeed, the Kids observed how the cat was licking up the trail of sweet drippings that led from the Twins back up the hill to the little house. "But," continued Freetie, "we just had to come see, when the puthy-cat told us there was a troop of walking flowers passing by. You see, we just love anything pretty.

"Yes, mother taught us to be that way," supplied Thyugar.

“Who was your mother?” asked Bob Tayle.

“Why, Mother Goofe, of course,” stated the twins simultaneously, surprised that anyone should not know who the author of all darling goodness and sweetness and prettiness was. “She always said we should keep away from everything bad and hurtful and real and just stick to everything nice. And so that it would be easier for us she made us out of spun sugar and honey and cream and perfume and gossamer and taught us always to go dressed in butterscotch or caramel—or chocolate, when we were going formal.”

“Does it never get just the least bit... cloying?” asked Ruth Lesce.

“All the time,” confessed Thyugar. “We fight it—but there you are: it’s our nature. But, oh—!” Here Thyugar began to flick ineffectually with viscid hands at big flaky smuts that were settling on her(?) slippery sleeves. “This dirt in the air is too awful. Quick! let’s go back in the house. Aren’t you bothered by it?”

“Indeed we are,” assured Tom Eighto.

“We’re on our way right now to the court of Glinda the Good to see if she can’t do something about it .”

“Oh, what a good idea,” squeaked Fweetie . “*Please!* take with you the ardent wishes of *everyone* we’ve spoken to for—oh, years and years.”

“Oh, longer, sweetings,” contradicted Thyugar lovingly. “I’d say nearer years and *years* and years that people dropping—often, gumdropping—in here have complained about the frightful air pollution. Well, it’s kept us under house-arrest; we just don’t almost ever dare to go outside any more.”

Soon all the flowers that could crowd into the cottage had crowded in and the hum of voices and the scent of sweets and flowers were nearly overpowering. The Sticky Twins were in seventh heaven and thought they’d never had such a chance or would again, to swoon at the sight of so much floral beauty. They quickly got on the phone and rang round to all their friends to say they were giving a reception for the Careleaver Kids that very evening.

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That meant the Kids were trapped. It would be an awful breach of manners to decamp and leave the twins to receive their guests alone. The most they could prevail on their hosts to do was to open a window, or, for preference, several. Then they formed a receiving line.

One of the early arrivals was the crow Kaggi-Karr, associate of the famous Scarecrow of Oz in an alternate-universe version of the magic land, who was staying in the neighborhood. She occasionally crossed over to this “sequence” to have a taste of life in an Oz totally different from the one she knew.

“Pwuuh!” snorted the crow, flying in the open window to perch on Fweetie’s head, then hastily thinking better of it (when she realized the twin’s ‘hair’ was like birdlime) and moving to the bust of Pallas up above the chamber door. “That was awful. Shut the windows, some body, please. Why have you got them open?”

“It was so stuffy in here,” reported Norm Allitee, “*And* warm, and our hosts were starting to run - and we didn’t wanted to be parted from them yet a while.”

“Anyway it’s awful,” Kaggi-Karr grouched on, “the air, I mean. Is it always like this nowadays?! It’s worse than the Yellow Fog!”

“Oh? what’s that?” asked Jan U. Ary.

“The Fog^s?” cawed Kaggi. “Oh, that was a rather fun thing—I *don’t* think—we had in the alternate Magic Land some years back. A terrible old witch threw a spell over the country and we all nearly smothered before we managed to overcome her and turn off the fog.”

“I’m glad we don’t have anything like that,” put in Thyugar and shivered delicately.

“Are you kidding!” barked the crow. “This is worse. At least the Fog didn’t smell bad. This is like rotting eggs—or worse, actually. What *is* it like?” She reflected. “It’s like the stink from some of the volcanoes of the south. Have you got volcanoes

§ See *Yellow Fog Over Oz*. Editor’s note.

around here?"

"There's a small one a couple of doors down," informed Fweetie. "But it's not working at the moment, I understand."

"Well, you ought to do something about it!"

"We are!" piped up a round robin that had made it in before the windows were shut. "I'm here to collect your signatures to a petition for our rulers to take steps concerning the bad air—and the deterioration in the quality of life generally in these times. I've already got 6321 names..." It was rather a large robin.

"All birds, I suppose?" said Dick Tait.

"No!" disclaimed the robin. "I've got chipmunks, gala monsters, narwhals, ocelots, water buffaloes, piranhas, barn owls, lemmings, orangutans, penguins, and opossums. I think that's a pretty broad spectrum. In fact I didn't find one soul who thought conditions were all right and that nothing needed to be done."

"Well! what are we waiting for?" crowed the crow. "Let's get up a delegation and go off to your ruler—let's see, that's—oh, what's her name? I had it on the tip of my tongue."

"Ozma?"

"That's it! I'll even volunteer to head the group, bringing her the humble petition of the entire animal kingdom that she *do* something about it."

"We already are," put in Billy Doo diffidently.

"Are what?" snapped Kaggi-Karr.

"On our way to a ruler to get help against the pollution—only we thought we'd go to Queen Glinda, who might know more about such things."

So of course the crow had to hear the whole story. She *had* been rather wondering what this crowd of walking flowers was doing, crammed in the deserted cottage; I guess she didn't listen very carefully to her original invitation by the Twins. The upshot was that the Careleaver Kids stayed on until the next morning, discussing plans with the others. It was only at noon next day that they could get on their way again—as Kaggi-Karr and the Round Robin flew off to the Emerald City to confer with the Girl Ruler of All Oz about the crisis.

C H A P T E R S I X

It was the hundredth anniversary of the famous journey described in *Our Hundred Days in Europe* and Ozma knew it. Oh, not from prior knowledge. She'd simply asked Dr. Em. Wogglebug for a picture of a professor to go by and he'd pointed to the copperplate frontispiece of Oliver Wendell Holmes. That's the reason it appeared that the ghost of Dr. Holmes was haunting his native city a hundred years after anyone expected to meet him there.

"Be careful," Ozma had warned. Then she twirled her wand and the professor found his broadcloth dresscoat pocket filled with Citybank travelers' checks. "And now, away with you! Good lucks!" And the bug was disposed of.

Fortunately the professor's apparition took shape in the middle of the Common, so there was nobody (except a tramp picking up butts) to be startled by the sudden appearance of a gentleman in formal clothes a century out of date where no such gentleman had been before. The tramp thought he was in no position to complain to the police, so he merely scuttled off.

Dr. Em. Wogglebug strolled to the nearest bordering street, gasping a little in the monoxide-flavored air. At Tremont Street he quailed. How was he to cope in the torrent of wheeled traffic that poured along bumper to bumper? But then he reflected that

in twenty-four hours (he glanced at his wrist watch) precisely Ozma would whisk him back to Oz. All he *really* had to do was just keep alive till then.

The professor was not quite gormless. Held read up in his library on modern-day life in America in particular and on Boston in general, so he knew you could get anything in the world in the U.S.A. if you just had money enough. He patted his breast pocket reassuringly and when the traffic stopped up, due to a red light or collision a mile or two on down, he whisked open the back door of a taxi and hopped in. Pleasingly it was unoccupied.

"Dove vai?" said the driver.

"A l'Università.. Harvard. Entrata principale " replied the Wogglebug. Reading those 150 volumes in Italian (with the aid of a *parleur*) was now proving its usefulness.

Riding past Old North Church the professor was startled and said, "Oh, look, there's a sign in English!" and then, recollecting himself, added, "Scusate! Ho veduto qualcosa scritta nell'inglese. Non l'avevo aspettato."

That broke the ice and they chatted agreeably of recent events in the old countries as they rode along for miles under and then upon the elevated highways. "It reminds me of New York," said the professor, still speaking Italian and harking back to memories of more than half a century earlier. "Only there of course it was the railroads that were elevated. And I think the laundry hung out the windows wasn't so grey in those days."

"Yeah, it's getting pretty bad," agreed the cabbie. "But what the heck, we gotta pay a little price .for progress."

"'Progress'. Hm. How do you define that word?" the bug asked interestedly. This was sociology in action.

"Oh, more gadjets," replied the driver carelessly. Then, as they waited in another back-up, he thought the matter over. "More technology. More industry. Uhh... more people... More dirt!" he finished with a wry laugh.

"But the quality of life?" said the Ozite, thinking always of the bigger picture.

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“Oh, that’s the same as it ever way,” said the taxi man with matter-of-fact insight. “How good life is doesn’t depend on technology. It’s based on personal relations. Human nature hasn’t improved any though. There’s just a lot more of us around now to run up against.”

That did seem to sum up the case. Boston looked much more crowded than lower Manhattan had in 1904, and for sure it was dirtier. But then, what was the only thing that the unaided human creature could produce by itself? Dirt. And more people! It stood to reason that everywhere, as the numbers of humans increased geometrically, the amount of filth would also multiply in matching proportion.

“Of course your government is taking steps to limit population?” the professor carried on.

“Sei pazzo?!” cried the cabbie. “Take sway the last and most precious liberty of the individual? to reproduce himself as much as he likes? That’ll be the day.”

The wogglebug was thoughtful. Right now the view was filled by motor vehicles (admittedly, only one individual in each, except exceptionally) as far as the eye could see. That might be all very well now (though it was a little hard to breathe already). But just think; in only thirty-four years there would be twice as many people on earth as now in 1987. And in sixty-five years *four* times as many! The professor could picture the sky black and the mob motionless, as having no space to move in.

The depressing thought was cut short by their turning off the throughway, and in a moment Dr.Em. Wogglebug was deposited at the cellar car-entrance to the campus.

“Oh, you’d want Dr. Winerich,” said the girl in Reception. “He’s Chief of Holdings. I’ll just see if he’s in. Who shall I say it is?”

“Oh, Dr. Winerich won’t know my name. Just say a colleague from the University of Oz.”

“‘Oz’ . That’s A-H-S-E?” The young lady jotted. The professor informed her and she made a little production of using her eraser. “If you’ll just have a seat.”

It was only moments after an hour later that Dr. Em. Wogglebug shook hands with the librarian. "Oz, I think Miss Goldfarb said," said Dr. Winerich. "A pleasure to meet you, sir." It seemed to the Ozite that the Chief of Holdings quizzed him rather intently.

Succinctly but very genially the Wogglebug stated his mission; a library of the highest order was to be supplied to his university. Where better in the world could he seek guidance as to acquisitions than at the Library of Harvard?

"Splendid! We'll run you off a listing of our entire holdings on microfilm," offered Dr. Winerich.

"Microfilm'?" repeated Dr. Em. W. The learned one had, with embarrassment, to confess total unfamiliarity with the concept.

Dr. Winerich explained, then immediately understood that, if microfilm was unknown at the foreign university, means for making use of it would be equally unavailable. He continued; "We'll do you an off-print on flimsies. It'll be rather bulky..."

"No problem," said the Wogglebug, who had no other luggage. "I'll probably be able to carry it? on my person?"

"Oh, yes, I think so."

"It will be only as far as the nearest reliable book purveyors. Which would you recommend?"

Dr. Winerich told him; warehouses and dealers' depositories in Boston and New York. Then he accompanied his visitor to the top of the staircase. "By the way," he said genially, "will you be paying a visit to the University of Wyoming while you're over here?"

"Why, no," admitted the Doctor Emeritus, "I hadn't thought of it. How so?"

"They have the largest archive of Oz-related materials in this country. You might be interested in looking over their collections."

"That *would* be interesting."

"Ask for Dr. Allan Trosius there," advised the librarian, "—and convey my cordial greet—"

Prof. Wogglebug stopped and stared at the worthy academic

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who likewise had stopped and was staring at a bust that occupied a place of honor near the head of the staircase. Dr. Winerich turned his head to look at the visiting professor and then back at the sculpted head, under which was a small metal plate that read; "Author of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, "The Chamber'd Nautilus", *Elsie Venner*, etc. Professor of Anatomy for 35 years."

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

The crowd in the Emperor's bedroom talked on into the night. The weeping of the flesh woodmen and the crying of the tin calmed down after about an hour and the concerned friends of the Tin Woodman formed the F.T.W., or "Friends of the Tin Woodman", and held their first plenary meeting, after swearing an oath not to rest until the air pollution that was ruining life in Oz had been done away with, soot and stench.

"How can we?!" was the great question voiced in its classic form for the first time by Forrest Sawyer and written into the constitution; 'What can be done to stop pollution?'

"Go to the source," said the Tin Woodman in a still small voice.

"But that's—" said Forrest and then fell silent in awe.

"Exactly," confirmed the Emperor. "This pestilence is worldwide—and not of Oz origin. It is, quite succinctly, the seemingly unavoidable concomitant of worldwide industry; worldwide with the exception of the Oz continent."

At that a lot of the men trembled and grew pale. They had never been outside of the confines of Oz and were much under the impression of the dreadful tales they had heard of the great world: the rampant crime, the universal violence, and the forerunners of the Third World War which were raging

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intermittently in southern Africa, the Gulf states, the East Indies, and Central America. “Does Your Majesty mean actually go to the source?” wondered a metal mail-man. “Not just fly over and drop leaflets?”

“Those, I’m afraid, would never be noticed in the general litter,” said Chopper solemnly, “—or so I’ve heard it described.”

The crowd consternated a bit and then Captain Fyter said, “I’m not afraid. I’ll go!”

Now the captain was known rather for bravery than for brains. This the woodman Emperor had to point out delicately. With a cambric handkerchief he wiped away another tear, touched at such devotion and gallantry on the part of his old friend. “I am afraid, Lance—that it just wouldn’t do. It’s diplomats who’ll be wanted, not soldiers. It must be a campaign of words, not deeds.”

“Please tell us what you have in mind, your highness,” said the green woodman. “It’s like this,” explained the Emperor. “We in Oz could protect ourselves. Some sort of shield could be erected whereby the soiling of our air, not to mention our soil, could be stopped. But that would only be getting at the *result* of the evil, not the cause. The latter is what I think we must try to combat because if we do not conditions here and everywhere can only get worse. We’re fortunate that worldwide sea pollution has not also affected us but that too will come in time. All the lands beyond the deserts will feel it. We can’t just rest content in our hallowed isolation here in Oz. For the sake of the whole world we must go out and do what we can.”

“But what *can* we do?” repeated several voices at once.

“*Talk to them!*” cried the Woodman, all aflame. “Get them to change their ways!”

Unfortunately nobody else seemed to take fire at that proposal.

“Talk”? But humans had been doing that for fifty centuries or more without it getting them anywhere. It might on the contrary be better if they shut up for a spell. If they looked rather than listened it would strike them all in no time what awful shape

the world was in and then they might *do* (rather than say) something about it.

However, "Tell us more, your majesty," entreated Coupeur du Bois of the Gillikins.

"Well, I thought it might just be possible that some of you able-bodied ones could go to the leaders out in the great world and offer advice about the problem. You'd have credentials from Ozma, of course, so I don't doubt but what you'd get a hearing."

I think it was fondness for the popular ruler rather than any conviction about the possibility of success of such a venture that caused some three or four in the crowd to throw up their hats mid cry, "Long live the Emperor of the Winkies! As his loyal men, we'll go!" And there was a great creaking and clanking of metal parts.

"Oh, I didn't mean you tin fellows," Nick hastened to explain. "We'd want all the credibility we can get. I'm afraid when the great-worlders got a look at you plated gentlemen, they just wouldn't believe."

"We could pretend we were from Disneyuniverse," suggested one.

"Then they might *believe* but they wouldn't pay any attention. No, I think we'll want folks who can mingle with the crowd and not look conspicuous."

The flesh woodmen looked at each other and then at their formerly flesh colleague. "I guess you mean as, your highness," said Woody Hackett. 38/

"Yes!" exclaimed the Tin Woodman, cheered that the penny had dropped at last. Actually, he was rather disappointed that the proposal hadn't come from the ten woodmen themselves, However... "You can be fitted out with attaché cases and homburgs and make a splendid impression."

"But what are we to offer them as a measure against the ravages of industrial pollution?"

"Why, magic!" said the Emperor.

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

“Pollution,” said the Good Witch of the South. “That’s the problem.”

“Don’t we know it!” rejoined Ken Ettick jauntily. “The question is: where’s it coming from? And what can we do about it?”

“You all received your care packages from Princess Ozma, didn’t you?” enquired the red ruler. “That’s supposed to be sufficient to maintain health in all the sentient citizens of Oz.”

“Okay,” said Al Jebra. (There are no crowned heads in the Charmed Garden and the Kids were a bit unsure what tone to adopt in addressing royalty.) “But that’s for us ‘sentient’ ones. A lot of us in the Garden *ain’t* sentient; leastways they can’t open a care package and read the directions. The result is they’re keeling over and lying there just as if they were—er, destroyed.”

“Yes,” said Phil Anthropy, “and worse than that: new plants just aren’t getting a start at all. The Garden’s turning into a desert, and a black one at that.”

“We really do feel, your grace,” said Greg Areus, “that eventually something drastic and permanent will have to be done. Since we plants are going to be the first to be decimated if conditions keep on, we thought we ought to be the first to let you know how bad things are really getting.

“I’m very grateful to you,” acknowledged Glinda, “for your

public-spirited-ness. Of *course* something must be done, and of course I've long been aware of the problem. However, since its source is abroad I hardly could see what I *could* do. You ask where the pollution is coming from. It comes from the great industrial world outside, which is to say; all the planet beyond our own continent of Sempernunquam. The growth of industry has been remarkable. The last of the undeveloped regions have come up to the general high level of technology, the last trees in the Amazon were removed last year, and *this* year the United States achieved the distinction of being the first country to be fully paved from coast to coast. Naturally there are 'marginal side effects', as they term them, from all this spectacular growth. The last trees in *Europe* were also removed last year, but unintentionally. People in the great world are finding it convenient to live in great underground complexes, where all air is filtered before it reaches them—"

The sorceress looked like she was going to carry on indefinitely describing the wonders of technological civilization but happily Connie Feruss interrupted her:

"Would we want that here?"

"No," said Glinda, coming to her senses.

"What are we going to do about it then?"

"To protect Oz?"

"Yes. We thought," carried on Chris Cross "you would be able to do something by magic.

"Yes," agreed the sorceress pensively, "there are measures that might be taken. But right at the start there are two problems. One: even magic has its limitations. I could erect a shield around the whole country. I wouldn't presume to do it for the entire continent, over the rest of which our ruler has of course no jurisdiction. Such an enclosing canopy would keep out airborne pollution, the great villain of the piece. But it would also keep out air! When we had breathed up the Oxygen within the shield, what then? Not to speak of all the other life-giving phenomena of nature that we would be cut off from. It could never rain or snow in Oz again, and soon all our plant life, yourselves

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included, would wilt as our water supply disappeared. Once more: what then?"

The Kids were more than depressed, and showed it. But finally Ed U. Cayshun said faintly; "What was the other problem, your grace?"

Glinda went on; "Whether without first getting their permission, I would be justified in taking steps single-handed," she said, rather mixing her metaphors, "that would affect every creature in Oz."

"Oh, yes!" cried the Careleaver Kids in chorus; "we found out that much on our way here." Then they described the encounters they had had upon their journey, with emphasis on the Round Robin's petition. "That's right," said the Southern Sorceress. "I ran into Princess Ozma yesterday at the Tin Woodman's reception and she told me about that. She feels as you—and all of us—do; that the thing cannot be put off longer. but she hardly knew what to suggest. Nor do I, but I've begun thinking in terms of that big magic canopy or dome I mentioned—"

Glinda broke off as the videophone on a ruby magazine stand beside -the throne chimed. "Excuse me... Yes... Why, Nick, how nice to hear from you! Are you feeling any better?... Oh-h... It was so kind of you to receive us all. I hope it didn't exhaust you..."

"Yes, I know. It's simply frightful, isn't it?"

"What? Oh, splendid. Really? The F.T.W.?" Glinda jotted something. "Of course! Delighted. Yes, certainly; right now."

"Fine. I'll call back after we've met." The good witch put down the receiver and looked out across the gently undulating host of flowers before her throne.

"Emperor Nick. You heard. Now, kids, quickly, if you will; move back - say about five yards - on all sides, away from right here in front of my seat, all right? We're going to have visitors!"

"Yes, it seems this grave problem is coming to a head all over. The Emperor of the Winkies—he's unable to come himself, of course—is sending a delegation of ten here to discuss

ways and means of getting at the source of this evil. Good for Nick! he's thought further than I. He wants to send this party out into the world and try to put a stop to the pollution right at the source—"

The Sorceress had got no :further than that when with a queer, loud, but muffled pflop! ten men in rainbow colors with axes on their shoulders appeared in the course of a split second on the cleared area of the polished carnelian floor.

If that was startlement enough for all concerned, there yet happened something else in the moment that followed which would have at a later time farther-reaching and longer-lasting effects. That thing was this:

The ten woodmen gasped at their sudden displacement, gawked at the red ruler on the royal chair before them, and then turned to look in awe around the great chamber where swayed, like the fairest garden field that had been seen in Oz in many years, a thousand flowers.

The woodmen saw what they had been missing in their lives but had missed so gradually that they were hardly aware of it. The Careleaver Kids in all their bedraggled finery had of course had a run under the showers before presenting themselves for their audience with Glinda, so now they nodded and tilted in the throne room as raindrop fresh as flower fields had used to be before the first internal-combustion engine exploded into life. The sight was ravishing, and the woodmen were ravished.

While Glinda and her lady attendants watched, the woodmen stepped gently among the flower throng and picked a violet here, a carnation there, a nasturtium yonder, and stuck them in their buttonholes. Then they turned back to the Quadling Queen and reported for service.

C H A P T E R N I N E

Dr. Em. Wogglebug leaned over the tall blond student's shoulder. "What's that, Henk?"

The tall blond student flushed, but made no attempt to hide his work. "Oh, just doodling, really... But—er—I had an idea."

"Go on." The bug perched on a high architect's stool and crossed some of his limbs over a knee.

"Well, it's this air impurity. I was wondering if there wasn't some way we could install filters—like over a whole house, or even a whole community."

"Technically the thing is possible," encouraged the Wogglebug. "Same such scheme was being discussed already in the sixties, out in the great world... though of course in those days it was with the idea of weather and temperature control."

"I know. I've been reading up on it. They've got quite a lot on it in the New Wing..."

"Mm, the New Wing," murmured Prof. Wogglebug and felt again a glow of satisfaction. That was where the one million books lived that he had brought back from America.

"Their idea in those days was just to keep the weather out and have an even fixed humidity. Never rain or ice or storms. What I was thinking, of was a way to let the weather *in*, only filtering out all the impurities.

We'd want the snow, we just wouldn't want the sulphuric acid. We'd want the sunshine but not the harmful ultra-violet. And so on."

"How far have you got?" Dr. Em Wogglebug was now quite serious, all thought of twitting a day-dreaming student forgotten.

"Well, the physical shell is easy. There's the lay-out for that—" Henk pointed to a thin sheaf of large semi-transparent sheets. "It's the air-filtering process I've been puzzling over. I think I might have it though. See?: blowers that operate at right angles to each other in layers: the vertical ones maintain the supply of 'fresh' outer air, the horizontal ones blow out the impurities. And they don't take up all that much space—"

The two academics kept it up for forty minutes and then adjourned to the college bar for rum(-flavored) rickies. By then the main outlines of a complete atmosphere-filter plant to serve the entire land of Oz were well established in the minds of both scientists.

"But won't it be a colossal physical undertaking?" the Professor still hedged. "You've got not only to plan the mechanics of the filter-dome itself but you must grapple with the sheer logistics of *raising* such a dome. That's a whole different barrel of engineering."

"I've put a lot of thought into that too, Doc," returned Henkomankatogale. "But—here in Oz at least—that part should be easy. We just do it by magic!"

"Wppp...!" spluttered the bug and got rum (flavor) down the wrong pipe. "Howzatagin?... Magic?!"

"Why, sure. I figure the, at least, *combined* magic of our leading Oz practitioners ought to be able to bring it off, sizeable as it is."

"Well, but—" objected the professor, "if *magic's* going to do the whole thing, why even bother planning the layout of the mechanism? Just let magic do it from scratch!"

"Oh, but that's what it couldn't you know... At least, I don't think..."

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Now neither of these savants, though residing in the magical land, was in himself a magic-worker. The difference, however, was that Prof. Wogglebug had never even thought of himself in the role of one bringing off magic tricks, but young Henk had given a deal of thought to the nature of magic.

"I've read up a little," he now revealed, "on the history of wonder-working. Incidentally, those references are not in the New Wing, but, as is clear from acquisition dates, were already to be found in the old pre-Boston holdings. Funnily enough, there wasn't all that much about the philosophy of magic in the books you brought from the States!"

Prof. Wogglebug accepted the pleasantries for what it was worth and his pupil went on; "In every account of incidents involving actual magic spells, I found that a charm or an incantation brought off exactly what was specified, never more nor less—"

"That's all to the good, wouldn't it be?" asked the Wogglebug. "I mean it shows that magic's an exact non-science."

"Let me illustrate what I mean; if, say, a given spell is worded; 'Let there be a dog on this table in front of us', that's exactly what you'd get, neither less nor more. I mean it would be a dog with no distinguishing characteristics; as near an ideal 'average' dog as you could get—and incidentally of a size to suit the receptacle where it was wished to. On a plain 'unspecified' wish like that you wouldn't get a Great Dane or a Chihuahua, nor yet a dog with very long-hair or no hair, nor having any other out-of-the-average specifications."

"And yet," the professor hemmed still further, "you *could* get an unusual dog, if the magic was at all efficacious. A green dog, for instance, or - or, say, a dog with a tail ten feet long - or, well, anything you cared to specify."

"Exactly!" crowed Henk. "Anything you *specified*! That's just the conclusion I came to. Magic delivers what you specify, but *only* what you specify. After all, magic is a force of nature—or maybe 'unnature', but the possibilities would be the same; nature can't plan, nature can only let happen... what

comes naturally.”

“Oh, come,” said the Wogglebug, who, curiously enough, had never worked his way through this particular line of logic before. “Nature can bring about the most complicated structures.”

“But not by planning or thinking. Everything in nature happens because natural laws couldn’t allow anything else to happen.”

“What about snow-flakes?: intricate, perfect, and no two alike.”

“An excellent example, sir!” rejoiced the youth. “The inevitable result of natural forces—and impossible to plan.”

“Hm,” sighed the bug, about to be convinced. “And then?”

Magic can’t ‘plan’. There’s no mind there to figure anything out. It can only materialize what has been suggested to it. When it comes to an installation that is supposed to span all Oz and purify the air for a million people; well..! It’s better to be prepared with a blueprint, I think, to which one can point and says ‘Make that reality! Hey presto, changeo!’”

C H A P T E R T E N

"Magic," the Emperor had said.

"Yes, what did you mean exactly?" said Princess Dorothy, where she sat on the edge of Nick Chopper's bed. She crossed her knees, then pulled down her hem modestly. "Why, just what I said," replied the Woodman, looking at his friend with a little mild astonishment.

"But *magic*—gout in the world?" It was the princess' turn to look more astonished yet. "It just doesn't work, dear. *You* know that... At least, in more than one or two isolated and questionable cases..." Even in Dorothy's own experience there had been those one or two incidents taking place in the world outside Oz which she had never wholly been able to explain away as something non-supernatural.

"Oh, no," the tin man retorted. "I *don't* know that. Indeed, it's just exactly my own experiences in America, the recollection of which convinces me that magic can work there and maybe now could be useful again."

"You mean...?"

"Yes, my queer adventures in the United States—and the equally remarkable ones of the straw man—in 1904. I wasn't just imagining them; I did go there? and in my own tin shape? "

"So Mr. Baum says," admitted Dorothy.

“And he never tells a fib.” That point at least was gospel. “So then; if I, magically alive as a man of tin, could walk and talk in America and do everything including live, why wouldn’t other forms of magic work? and if one form would work, why not all forms? Great-world industry might then be powered by magic! and in one stroke all sources of pollution would become redundant and could be done away with.”

“Whew! “ said Princess Dorothy. “That’s a tall order. Have you thought that all over carefully, Nick?” The Princess, herself a Ph.D., herself took a moment to think it over. Then she said, “Granted that something might be done to *power* industry by magic—and thus do away with the need for fossil-fuel-burning and atom-smashing, and the resultant pollution—have you considered that a great deal of the *product* of industry is also pollutant? I’m thinking of the unwanted *bi*-products of manufacture, which are disposed of via air and water and do so much to threaten life. You couldn’t get rid of those without getting rid of the industries themselves, and that the outer-worlders would of course never allow.”

“Oh, darn, Dorothy,” mourned the Tin Woodman, depressed, “now you’ve punctured my beautiful dreams.” He turned his face to the wall and repined. Dorothy waited - sympathetically, of course. She knew Nick wasn’t going to give up *that* easily the wheels he’d set in motion. Presently indeed he went on; “No! Dorothy. Now mark this well; magic *can* save the world, even if, in the end, the magic has to be performed here in Oz.”

“Gracious “ said the princess, really caring. “That’s wonderful news, and most reassuring. Do you mind telling me what it is you’re suggesting?”

But Nick wasn’t going to give over his last-ditch resource of magic to the possible scoffing of his devoted friend. He *had* to have something to believe in; we all do (even if it is something totally unreal like the possibility of the betterment of human nature). He was going to hang onto his hope and dream ‘til the last possible moment.

Since so much was going to happen on down the road that

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would obviate the trying out (at least within the time scope of this book) of what Nick Chopper had in mind, it may be as well to inform the reader, who may come to suspect an unhappy ending, of the nature of the tin man's visionary scheme. It was simply that if/when all else broke down Oz adepts of magic would fan out over the world and, instead of changing *things* by magic, change minds so that humans gave up the drive to engulf the planet in unnecessary population and the wish to have the products of pollutant industry. It will at once be seen how *very* visionary such a notion was.

For the nonce, the Woodman said, "It's air pollution that is chiefly bothering Oz. When you come right down to it, that *all* comes from the burning of substances to produce energy. Suppose you were to cut all that out and never burned another lump of coal or drop of oil—or smashed an atom (to provide us all with fall-out) ...?"

"Industry would screech to a halt in a moment," declared Dorothy.

"And yet there's one source of energy that burns day and night, and has done so forever, and bothers nobody..."

"The sun!

"Yes. Or even the moon. Think of the incredible power of that dead world whose mere gravity force can pull the incalculable weight of the earth's oceans about. Do you mean to say that that energy can't power a few Earth industries if properly harnessed? Not to speak of what sun energy could do. And I think magic can help in finding the means to do the harnessing!"

"How thrilling," exclaimed Dorothy, catching fire a little. "If only one knew how!"

"Yes," said Nick, and paused. "If only *you* knew how, indeed. Because, dear Dorothy, I want you to be the one to head up the mission to the great world!"

Mrs. Choggolak was flabbergasted.

When the others had gone home after the centenary celebrations, she had just stayed behind in Winkiezia thinking to

comfort her old and ailing friend. She'd heard of the convocation of woodmen but, taken up with her own little preoccupations (mostly indoor ones, so she wasn't all that bothered by the thin grey haze that hung over Oz most of the time now), she hadn't really paid much attention. Now she fluttered a bit.

"Me? your imperiality!" said she. "Whatever—Why, I don't know the least—Why, I don't even—" (She was going to say 'care' but realized in time it would hardly do in one of her lofty rank, presumed to have the well-being of the commonalty at heart at all times. She changed it to:) "know where to begin to try to get an understanding of the problem."

"You don't need to, dear Dorothy," said the Tin Woodman. "A suffering creature in a trap" (the tender-hearted Woodman knew all about such) "doesn't have to know the workings of the gin to want out—and to protest. 'That's all we want you to do. But you see, your prominence in Oz affairs and your fame in America will open doors that otherwise might stay shut to the unaccompanied woodmen. Don't forget: your picture has been on U.S. postage stamps.

"Oh, yes," said Princess Dot and blushed modestly. "You mean the set of twelve issued on the 140th anniversary of Mr. Baum's birth. But it wasn't really good of me. That tacky hair-do! No one would recognize me."

"Never mind. Sorceress Glinda can do over your appearance when—that is: if—you agree to take the part of roving ambassador. You can look just like Judy Garland in the film. Then you can be sure you'll be recognized."

"Oh Judy," sniffed Dorothy. "She was too old—" then stopped with a gasp to realize that it was to Miss Garland's developed sixteen that she, Dorothy, had by now allowed herself to advance in apparent age. After all, it would be ridiculous to appear any younger when one had a son teaching at the university.

"You'll go then?" said Nick Chopper, smiling—well, not slyly.

"I didn't say that."

"But you will?"

"Yes."

C H A P T E R

E L E V E N

Everybody (who was anybody) was assembled in the Banqueting Hall of the Palace of Magic in the Emerald City. This might very well be considered the most important day in the history of the fairyland. For the first time Oz wasn't going to just BE something but would DO something, and that no less a thing than to save the world (from itself).

A large contingent of the Careleaver Kids was there, casting their fragrance on the dessert air (a regulation banquet had just been served for all participants. Ozma didn't think it was quite the thing for the delegation to arrive in America with empty stomachs.) Fweetie and Thyugar were present, dripping over everyone. Some people thought *they* were the dessert and tried to eat them but got a sharp rebuff. Kaggi-Karr was making rather a production of her participation and bragging, in small private asides, that it was in fact she who had finally got this show on the road. All the usual Oz celebrities were at the scene, all except the Tin Woodman. He was just *too* frail to be able to stand any further transplantations from his own sick-room.

Close to Princess Ozma at the head table was Queen Glinda, the master planner. To her went all credit for the delicate diplomacy that had led up to the arrangements for the woodmen's tour. The sorceress was feeling especially bucked because word

had just come that the Honorable Nigel Ndunkrumbwa, prime minister of the United Kingdom, had agreed to receive the delegation - or such members of it as would be able to take time out from appearing at a round of children's festivals the world over. Glinda had heard via the grapevine that the News of the World and the Sunday Observer already had headlines to the effect that "Queen to see Snow White, Dwarfs at Buck House", and she whispered as much to Princess Dorothy and the ten-man party who sat down the table to right and left of herself and the Girl Ruler.

That ruler tapped her glass and silence fell immediately. "This is the darkest day in the history of our land," quoth Ozma. Well, it was December 22 but it wasn't all *that* dark; but Ozma was speaking semi-allegorically. "The clouds (of carbide gas) that lowered upon our house, and realm, have grown imperceptibly but steadily worse, every day for many years. From tomorrow they will grow lighter—because our friends are going out into the world to tell the people there is a better way—"

Cheers! And hats (indoors!) were tossed into the air. The enthusiasm was intense. When Dr. Dorothy Choggolak, Bûcheron Arbrisseau, Waldo Baumschneider, Coupeur du Bois, Albero Boscaiolo, Arbol Cortador, Woody Hackett, Tajar Madera, Forrest Sawyer, Legno Tagliabosco, and Skog Vedhuggar had taken bows, Ozma went on. But the woodmen, or for that matter their little lady leader, weren't listening. The briefing sessions of the last weeks, nay months had been too grueling and those that weren't falling asleep were trembling in their boots. Would they be able to bring it off? At the best they were, all of them, unwilling converts to the cause. It was only patriotism, love of fatherland, that drove them on. They *wanted* to succeed, but could they? They felt such neophytes. Even Princess Dr. Dorothy, after a century of public appearances, was wondering if she had the aplomb. But then the princess stiffened her lip. Why, that queen wasn't even born when she, Dorothy, was already a princess in Oz!

The Kansas princess and the woodmen weren't the only ones

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who were feeling qualms. Witch Glinda was too. In actual fact, it was why she herself was not going along on the expedition. She had at first, in the general enthusiasm, bought the idea that Oz magic could solve all the great world's pollution problems. Then one day she was suddenly brought up short by the thought; What if it couldn't?!

Hastily she went over in her mind a long list of magical things that had happened (reputable novelists said so) out in the world beyond Fairyland: the frequently cited visits, with complete viability, of the Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, Wogglebug, and other Ozites in the United States; the functioning of Peter Delphia's (and her own Button Bright's) magic umbrella; the same of Mary Poppins' parrot-headed one; the awesome behavior life of E. Nesbit's "It"; the coming to life of the "Old Magic" of Wales; the performances of Mrs Whatsit, Mrs Who, and Mrs Which; the magic-making book of young Bastian; the impossible but undoubted true return of Merlin to save England; the doings of Pinocchio; and the strange journey of the children with Miss Price, who surely became a bona fide working, witch.

The capability of magic in non-magical settings could not be doubted (at least as far as children were the witnesses!). But what about adults? It was they who were doing the polluting and would have to be converted. Now if she herself were along and the dictator of Bulgoslavia said, 'Okay, Glinda old girl, show us! Replace that factory's bituminous-burning with magic energy!', would she be able to bring it off?

If not, it certainly wouldn't be for lack of trying. Ever since the Careleaver Kids had arrived (by now more than two months ago) with their urgent plea that something be done, she had been practising every day: not just powering power plants by magic but first having to build them from scratch by the same process. For that she'd had to call in Prof. Wogglebug and he in turn had called in Docent Henkomankatogale (hastily graduated and given his own laboratory in which to perfect his engineering skills). The docent, using procedures available, since the Rosenbergs, from the reference works in all well-ordered

libraries, had, in three weeks, produced drafts for a fully functional atomy-smashing complex. (Plenty of the minute, magic-packed creatures had been found willing to sacrifice themselves for the general good; being magic and Ozian they didn't really 'die' anyway, just disintegrated.)

With Henk's plans to read from, Glinda found it simple to waft into being high-powered energy installations—and then waft them as quickly out again, ugly things! But *could* she, when it came to the crunch, do it in the outer world? She daren't risk it. Better to send off the delegation quite without any magic know-how of their own, just primed to make the plea for trying magic, not actually attempting to pull off prestidigitations on their own.

But now at the banquet table she waffled. Was anyone going to pay any attention if the ambassadors couldn't prove their claims? Well, they could but try.

Now Ozma was tapping her glass again. The big moment had arrived. Acting in concert, she, Sorceress Glinda, the Wizards Oz and Wam, Good Witch Diane (ex-Tattypoo), and other accredited adepts were going to wave their wands, scepters, spark-plugs, or whatever, and wish the travelers to the main gate of Disneyuniverse at Smith Center, Kansas (the center not only of Smiths but of the lower-continental United States, as well as of the world, of course—though, curiously, not of Kansas). The Queen of the Quadlings had been instrumental in choosing that venue for the delegation's reception in the great world, rather than, say, Ozworld outside Chittenango, New York. After all, was she not a "Mrs. Smith" herself?

The ten woodmen took tearful leave of their wives, children, and other collaterals who had followed them to the Ruby City from all corners of Oz and established themselves in temporary lodgings while the men were undergoing their indoctrination course. Now they'd all come along to the Emerald City for blast-off day, before returning to the own several homes.

Ambassador Choggolak hastily kissed her parents, aunts and uncles, husband (only one) and son. To the latter she said, "Wish

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me luck, darling. Meanwhile, don't forget how to build protecto-domes. We may need them yet!"

So saying, she stepped to the cleared place before the Queen's seat at the banquet board and joined hands with Waldo and Tajar.

The instruments of enchantment were lifted high, they moved in mazy magic motion, and there was a crashing... silence—as the envoys vanished from sight.

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

In the end, rather than look grotesque in a pokey poke bonnet and a gingham skirt that would have stood out above her (apparently) sixteen-year-old knees like a tutu, Dorothy had chosen to resemble Judy Garland as in her film role in *The Wizard of Oz*. As a result there was an instant deafening round of applause under the great reception dome (by now they'd perfected the same sort of installation - on a smaller scale - in the world ex-Oz as well) where the tens of thousands waited to welcome the travelers. Some of the older fans close up started screaming "Give us 'Over the Rainbow', Judy! PLEEEZE..!"

Dorothy was prepared for an ovation but even so the general fervor made her blink and start back. The ten woodmen were behind her, however, so she didn't get far. In a moment she had to turn and face the music. This was provided by the ninety-piece orchestra, which had struck up a medley of 'Ding-Dong, the Witch Is Dead', 'Get Happy', and 'The Man that Got Away'. The princess cleared her throat and waited for her downbeat. Then, to the surprise of the multitude, she started *talking*.

"My friends," she said. Then a midget, got up in the costume of a Hollywood Munchkin, stepped forward and presented her with a bouquet and sang:

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“As Mayor of the Munchkin City
I thought it would be a pity
If you didn’t get a bouquet
As a nice little way to say;
We welcome you to Munchkin Land! “

Dorothy smiled and was about to continue her speech when three little girls rushed forward with further bouquets, thrust them in her hands, stood back, and began to squeak: “We represent—” then burst into tears. Their mothers, costumed as suburban housewives and standing in the front row of welcomers, now ran forward, clasped the wailing infants to them, and in a squatting position continued the welcome:

“We represent the *kindergartens*—
And, incident’ly, the Boy Scout dens—
As well as the leading womens’ and mens’
Societies to greet these ten salvation friends
in Munchkin Land!”

With that the mothers with gentle wallops sent the tots back to the ranks and turned to grab the bouquets out of Dorothy’s hands and distribute them among the gaping woodmen.

Next three little boys made up as midgets swaggered forward and recited:

“We represent the Vic Tanney gyms,
The Vic Tanney gyms,
the Vic Tanney gyms” (in these days it was considered very good form to insert paid commercial announcements wherever possible)

“—And in the name of aforesaid gyms
We welcome you to
Munchkin Land! “

Then they passed out bouquets to whoever of the new arrivals didn’t have any, which by this time included Dorothy.

The newcomers were most gratified and lifted their nosegays to sniff them but left off, finding them, though gorgeous, to be without scent. Then Princess Dorothy began: “My friends—” At this moment the entire ensemble broke into “We’re Off to

See the Wizard", and the mayor of the Munchkin City grabbed Dorothy's arm to hustle her through the turnstile. A widely smiling young lady made up as Minnie Mouse handed the ambadress a ticket printed "\$80" and over stamped "Complimentary", and the Oz girl was in! and had the freedom of Disney universe.

It was assumed she would want first to see the Emerald City, which had been reconstructed entire in the vast amusement park, exactly conforming to the plans of the original Oz metropolis, only better. Where the older city's walls were decorated with mere emeralds, its imitation had huge glass baubles with laser lights inside which cast a green brilliance undreamed of in the real E.C.

With the woodmen in tow, each with accompanying starlet hanging on his arm, and a cast of thousands streaming behind, the Major rushed Dorothy through the streets of the city. The princess just had time to recognize the street corner (marked by a plaque) where she had met Carter Green in the adventure of *The Vegetable Man of Oz* before she was in the reproduction of Ozma's 60/ Palace of Magic and in minutes stood before the banquet table she had just left, other minutes before.

A most convincing, robot of Princess Ozma rose and extended plastic arms to Dorothy, saying, "My dear! how lovely to see you! Please draw near and let me greet you with a kiss."

Dorothy, in the suddenness of it all, could not help gasping, "Ozma! You here? But I thought—I..."

"My dear! " replied the pseudo Ozma. "How lovely to see you! Please draw near—"

"Oh, I see," said Dorothy. "Of course you're not really—"

"My dear!" cried Ozma. "How lovely—"

The visitor turned away, biting her lip and fighting back a tear. But the mayor thought everything was going splendidly. "If you're ready, Miss Garland... The Mayor—I should say, the *other* Mayor—of Smith Center—is waiting to greet you. That'll be outside on the lawn, beside Lake Quad—"

"Good heavens," breathed the girl. "Is that here too?" Again

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she could not help recalling a memory: the fun and frolics of *The Green Dolphin of Oz*.

“Oh, yes, the entire City and nearer suburbs,” assured the Munchkin mayor and beamed with satisfaction. “There’s to be a motorcade and a reception at the Silo Hotel by the Governor. Incidentally, you’ll be staying at the Silo—gracious me! where’s your luggage?! That should have been sent on ahead...”

“Actually, we didn’t bring any,” confessed the newcomer with just a trace of confusion. “We thought we’d pick up a few things on the way...”

“Very wise!” praised the Munchkin, and made a note on his cuff. Dorothy had a sudden vision of the sets of matched suitcases she and her companions would probably receive at their next stop. You couldn’t fault Americans’ flashy generosity.

As the couple emerged on the lawn Dorothy had a glimpse far off of Legno Tagliabosco and Skog Vedhuggar being shoved into gondolas on the lake by their pretty companions. She didn’t know where the other eight men had got to.

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

“No, really; this won’t do at all,” said Benny Fishel (Art’s brother).

“What won’t?” replied Thyugar.

“The air! Your house is all black. We hardly recognized it now. And it’s only been—how many months?—since we were here before. I can’t believe how filthy the air is!”

“Wasn’t that just what I was saying at breakfast, sweetings?” said Fweetie. The twins ate great servings of salt pie and vinegar trifle, but nothing seemed to help; they still remained the sweetest things.

“I guess you were,” admitted Thyug. “But what can we do?”

“Send for Henkomenkatogale,” supplied Ida Lyze. “It’s all over Oz: he’s perfected what they call ‘filter domes’, and I’ll bet he’d be tickled to try one out here. Surely he couldn’t find a more deserving example of a depressed area due to air pollution.”

“Don’t forget it’s partly the fault of that volcano next hill over,” reminded Thyugar. A sudden thought struck her; “Oh, I say, we wouldn’t have to include that under our dome, would we?”

The form of her question indicated that assent had virtually been given for the measure. There were fourteen of the Care-leaver Kids in this detachment. They’d grown so fond of hoboing

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in the foregoing months that they couldn't quit, but now they settled down temporarily with the Stickies to watch the progress of construction.

Henk was delighted when the summons came. Even Dr. Em. Wogglebug took a short leave of absence and accompanied him when he traveled south. This would be the first substantial all-weather dome to be erected in Oz by traditional engineering methods. Making up blue-prints in minute detail was all very well but after a while you wanted to see the thing in physical there-ness.

"Too bad neither of us has any magic," sighed the bug as they tootled along the highway in the scalawagon-with-trailer-cart.

"How so?" said Henk.

"If we had a wishing ring or a magic wand, we could have it do a scan of the plans and raise the structure in a twinkling, without the labor of actual physical tectonics."

"Oh, but that's just what I like," protested the younger savant. "Like; it's more fun to bake a cake from scratch than just stir up a mix."

"Mmm—well, if you say so," said the Wogglebug, who was always stronger on theoretics than on actual carrying-out.

When Thyugar and Fweetie had oozed down to the bottom of their hillock to greet the arrivals they were as black as their house from the inches-deep layer of grit and grime that lay over the landscape. The admixture of solids gave undeniably, however, more purchase to their handshakes.

"Hm," said Henk, employing a handful of lint to clean up after the courtesies, and seeing a way he might save the twins from their environment and themselves. "Are you completely—er, suited with yourselves? as you are, I mean.."

"Oh, *yes*," assured Fweetie. "Everything was so *sweet*—'til this rain of terror began. Now we don't dare stir out of a door or *this* happens," and he surveyed ruefully what was left of his hand; the rest of it had come away on Henk's.

"I might," ventured the docent, "be able to come up with

something...; a flexible outer shell that would reproduce your features precisely and allow you a bit more mobility than at present?"

"*Would* you?" cried Thyugar all afire. "But," she paused, "would *we*?—want it, that is. No, actually I don't think we would. What about it, Fweets? Do we want after all to do away with that which makes us most ourselves, our overwhelming syrupiness? It would be like bobbing the lion's mane, filing his feeth, and clipping his claws: dispensing with everything that's most daunting about him. What you had left wouldn't be a lion any more."

"No, I think you're right, Thyug" seconded Fweetie, as they slurped stickily up the slope. "Anyway, that would be compromising with the awfulness: this siege of pollution, I mean, and thus in a sense accepting it—rather than fighting it on all fronts.

Once we begin institutionalizing it and living around it we're half way toward making it part of our normal lives. Then we'd never get rid of it."

The two scientists were surprised the Twins could reason so cogently. They gained a new respect for them and went to work with a better will than ever to provide them with an enclosed ambience where they could carry on living their unique lives undisturbed.

The work of construction didn't take long. The engineering profs 'hired' a crew of laborers from among the nearby Quadlings: bright fellows—and girls too, of course, since Lib had swept over Oz. For two weeks the Careleaver Kids stood around watching the ever-diminishing concentric rings of plexiglass rise. Then one day Belle E. Coase said, startled, "Why, it's exactly like a regular Oz hous! only vast—and see-through."

"And with multiple 'faces' and them squeezed right down at the bottom," added Rock Oko in an aside. "Here you don't get the visual impression of half a head poking out of the ground, as with a normal house."

"Right," laughed Docent Henk. He happened to be taking

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a breather near a group of the Kids at the moment. "This dome's a perfect half sphere. We thought we'd try that here where the topography is somewhat but not too much 'accidental'. If we do bigger air domes later on," he went on, scratching the ear of Aloysius the cat (he liked to hang around where the action was), "they'll be shallower on level ground or more eggshaped—over hills."

Suddenly little Cathy Turr gave a scream. "A bigger air-dome?! Oh, glory, yes. *Yess!!* ... Oh, please, Mr. Henk—" and the forgetmenot shrub collapsed in a suppliant heap in front of Henkomankatogale. "Will you not build a dome of delivery over our own, our only, our beloved *Charmed Garden of Oz?!*"

Before he could say yea or nay she implored on; "Then we can go home again! and not be afraid—afraid that sooty destruction will dog us at our heels, afraid when we fold our petals at dark that there may not be a new day to open them to—or, if there is, our leaves will be all gummy-stuck-together so we can't—"

"Please! " yelped Henk merrily, "hold a pause! so I can say Yes! Or... well, let me ask my colleagues. What do you think, Ms Jinjur?"

The tiny shrieks of the Careleaver Kids had attracted the attention of others of the construction crew and they drew near. Among them was a dark-haired lass with a commanding air who had rapidly established herself as Henkomankatogale's second-in-command. He'd got so he deferred to her in everything.

"Sounds all right to me," Jinjur admitted, pushing back her hard hat and thumbing a dope stick into the corner of her mouth. The misnamed, entirely non-habit-forming flavored 'suck sticks' were widely used in Oz, particularly among the working populace though Queen Glinda herself sometimes enjoyed a suck. "We'd want to branch out into something on a bigger scale soon in any case, wouldn't we?"

This was the first Henk had heard that the Quadling girl

(or, let's face it, young woman) was going to be associated with him on more than one construction job. Somehow, he found he didn't mind at all. But then, when you have commanded an army of women, corralling one man is nothing.

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

After the send-off banquet Kaggi-Karr felt a bit flat. Of course she'd picked up plenty of glory on that occasion. That was why she didn't go back to her alternate-universe Magic Land as she'd originally intended. It was a *long* time since she'd enjoyed this much glory over there.

But glory is a commodity that doesn't keep. After all the banquet-goers who had thrilled to the ringing of her praises had gone home, where was her glory then? She might have mobilized never so many armies of opinion; when the citadel was taken and the armies dispersed, where were you?

Disconsolate, she flew out of the palace window and perched on a wintry fence, all ruffled up like any old crow. She shuddered just a bit.

Then she noticed another bird sitting on the fence a few yards along. It was the Round Robin. "Oh, it's you," said Kaggi-Karr. "What doing?" It occurred to her that the bird looked as cheesed off as herself.

"Nothing much," said the robin. "Since the Big Petition, there hasn't been that much going on."

"No use for you any more, ey?" said the crow. "They get what they want out of you, then cast you aside like an old shoe."

"I guess it's like that," conceded the robin.

After that a silence fell. The wind shifted a little, blew some blackened leaves into a new arrangement in a corner of the fence, and both birds turned around on their perch.

"You know what, R.R.? .." said Kaggi. "Let's get out of this. That is: unless you're dated up?"

"No date," said R.R. "Where to?"

"I thought we'd fly over and see the Tin Woodman. I hear he's in worse shape than we are."

"Yeah. That's how-come he missed the send-off, you know."

"Yes, I know. And I missed *him*. Funny thing; I went to his centenary celebration with the contingent from E.C. here—but he didn't know me!"

"How do you mean?"

"I knew HIM all right. Okay, he's made out of iron in the alternate world but he looks pretty much the same as here. But he didn't know me from old Jackie Daw; she was there too."

"Why should he?" asked the robin, puzzled. "You know both universes but our Nick Chopper has never been out of this one."

"Yeah, I guess so," grumbled the crow. "Still, it was disappointing. After all I've done for that gink—in another universe."

"Like that?"

"Why, I've flown back and forth between Oz and the States so many times, rescuing him and Scarekickers there, that I can't count them." Kaggi-Karr paused. "Say, that's an idea."

"What is?"

"Are you on? Let's go then I want to go see if that tower is here—in this version of Oz; the one those two were always getting imprisoned in. It should be right on the way."

That was enough to launch the two birds into flight. A scant seven minutes brought them to the farther western outskirts of the Emerald City—or Veridian City, as it was ironically being called these days, now it was eighty shades darker (but the term was catching on in the folk mouth, an ominous sign).

No tower. "Oh, well, what would you expect? in *this* queer off-brand Oz," squawked Kaggi-Karr resignedly.

"Wudda ya mean?" returned the Round Robin indignantly.

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"This is the *original* Oz. Accept no substitutes! *This* is the norm. Those other Ozzes are just perversions of this one." The bird seemed genuinely hot under the collar. "It reminds me of something I've heard about science nitpickers who claim our moon isn't actually a moon; it's a 'companion planet'. Of course!! it's 'the moon'! It's the original moon. That's what we call that kind of thing in our night sky, *whatever* it may be. It's those marbles rolling around the other planets that aren't 'moons'. Call *them* something else!"

"Souse *me!*" said Kaggi, moving her respect for the robin up several notches. "Never mind. Come on!" And she headed out over Winkie territory.

Not for long though. They had not flown half an hour when the crow slowed down and began to lose altitude, fluttering in wide circles. "What's the matter?" yelled the robin.

"I don't get it!" gasped the other. "The Winkie country is supposed to be yellow! I'm sure that's what I was told. Admittedly; in—er, that other Oz it's violet. I've got to turn back! I've got to let Ozma know. We must tell Ozma. We must tell the Queen!"

"Tell her what?" asked the Round Robin laconically. He had checked in his flight as well and followed the crow.

"That she's got a new country in Oz, a brown one! "Something seemed to give the bird additional food for thought. "There's never been a brown country in Oz before. How interesting..."

"There still isn't," the robin dashed her fantasy. "Actually it's more of a burnt umber but it's the same old Winkie country, just crudded over pretty badly with this pollution. Anyway, I thought you'd been here before. You said you visited the Woodman."

"That's right. I merely got wished there, along with Ozma's party from E.C. And back again afterwards. I haven't been out and traveled in Winkie-land before; just in the South."

"It's the same deal there," informed the native bird. "Maybe a few degrees less blackened. You must have seen—"

"That the whole thing's maroon? Yes, but in the alternate Oz

the southern country's pink. I just thought something had been lost in translation."

"You might as well know," humped the robin. "The Munchkins are indigo, by now, if not outright navy; the little orange country has gone dark chestnut—but in fact you can hardly tell it by color from Quadlinga—while Gillikinland, let's face it, is black."

"Oh, dear, oh, dear," sighed Kaggi. "This *is* worse than the Yellow Fog... Well, come on."

Then it was bye-bye, black bird, as she flapped on, as the crow flies, into the west.

C H A P T E R

F I F T E E N

“Oh, but we mustn’t be separated!” cried Dorothy in alarm.

“It’s all right, dear,” shushed Mrs. Tubbs, who had been assigned by the studio as wardrobe mistress, make-up maid, and chaperon to the young girl. There mustn’t be a breath of scandal in connection with her triumphal world tour.

“But the woodmen and I belong together!” Dorothy continued to protest, “in—er, the never-never land and into tomorrow,” as if that clinched it.

“The gossip columnists are beginning to talk,” warned Mrs. T. “They feel it isn’t quite the thing for a young lady to be constantly surrounded by ten husky lumberjacks—and nobody else. So you’re to have your own press secretary, lady’s maid, chauffeur, and bodyguard—and of course do your own tour.”

“Oh, no, wait!” cried Dorothy, nova almost in panic as she saw the bus door close behind Forrest Sawyer and the vehicle start off. “We were to have seen the President today! I thought we were to board the plane right now.”

“That’s all been changed,” said the chaperon smoothly. “Mr. Koxden’s had to fly to Baghdad at the last minute. Instead, Miss Koxden, his daughter, is meeting us in New York and you’ll do a tour of the shops.”

“But what about my speech? I was supposed to address

Congress—”

“They feel the time isn’t right. What with the Moslem War entering a new stage and the Russians as stubborn as ever—”

“Oh, good heavens, that war’s been at a standstill for two years,” said the ambassador impatiently. In all the hours she’d spent kicking her heels in hotel suites she’d been able to get through five months’ worth of *Newstime* from cover to cover. “The black-in’s so deep the opposing lines haven’t been able to see each other since Christmas last year.”

“Never mind, my dear. I’m afraid, for the time being, this is the way it has to be.” Dorothy sulked and was silent all the way to New York. Within her, resentment was reaching a danger point.

The woodmen’s bus, meanwhile, proved to be merely a shuttle. Runway 4 was shut down due to oil slick. There had been a minor disaster; a private plane had collided with a helicopter on take-off and both aircraft had spilled their bowels over the flight path. The bus taxied the men to runway 1, where a jet was waiting to take them to Tokyo.

Inside the cabin all was confusion. “What?” yelled Tajar, “Tokyo?! What are we supposed to do there?”

“Shh,” said Forrest, who by now had gained some ascendancy as tacit leader of the group, “the Emperor’s expressed a wish to see us. He’s ninety-eight and they try to satisfy his every whim. It seems he’s read all the Oz books and is a regular fan. We might actually get to converse with him.”

“Yeah?” came back Tajar belligerently. “And what’ll we say to him? Dorothy’s our spokeswoman. We haven’t got a clue.”

“Dry up, okay? I’m working on it” — and Forrest licked his pencil and got busy on the back of the lunch menu.

But at the Aleutians bad news was waiting for them. The Supreme Soviet suddenly revoked the terms of the Seward treaty of 1867, claiming that it had been underwritten by an Imperial government, whose engagements were today so little binding that it was as if they had never been. Ergo, Alaska remained Russian territory and the woodmen’s B-81 had violated Soviet

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airspace by landing there.

There was panic at Attu! In the confusion four of the woodmen were ordered aboard a private GeeBee Sportster commandeered by the government, which made it across into the Yukon before soft-crashing.

The other six were herded back aboard their original aircraft, which, crammed with government officials, reporters, and members of the Harlem Globetrotters, was the last flight out before radio contact with the disputed region was temporarily closed down. It headed, not for Tokyo nor yet Hawaii or California, but the Air Force Base at Lapu-Lapu City in the Philippines.

At the Lord Poe-Hoycant in New York Dorothy said, "But, Najeeb, where am I going to put them all?" It was traditional, in view of their background, for all members of the President's immediate family to have Arab given names.

"Don't you *like* pretty things?" said Ms Koxden, a bit piqued.

"Oh, I adore them! But I already have five trunkfuls - and no way to get them back to Oz. It's not why I really came here!" Miss Najeeb smiled a bit sceptically. "'Oz'? But surely that is just a promotional gimmick - for your next film. *The Return of the Wizard of Oz?*"

"Ms Koxden," said Judy - I mean, Dorothy - in formal tones. "Do you really not know who I am? Mrs. Deans has been dead for thirty years. If there's to be a new Oz film it's nothing to do with me. Our mission was simply capitalized on for publicity by the film people. I'm here to try to

help solve the world pollution problem. But we can't get anyone to listen to us."

"How fascinating," breathed the president's daughter. "Then you mean Oz really exists. Wait till Dad hears this! He'll be thrilled."

"He already knows! I've told you; we had an appointment to see him earlier this week. Then everything was changed."

"Oh, but that's silly. Daddy'll love to have a talk with you about Ozma and the Cowardly Lion and the Patchwork Girl and all those famous figures. What if we go see him?! Would you

like that?"

Dorothy sighed, then smiled brilliantly. Perhaps Miss Koxden was merely as dense as she was sweet.

The president's daughter went to the phone, dialed, was shunted through several operators—and presently returned to say, "There, I knew it! Daddy's thrilled to bits. He says he'd never miss the chance to talk to Glinda of Oz!"

"Who?" stuttered Dorothy.

"Glinda. I told him I had this pretty young woman with me from a place called Oz and he knew right away who you were! Isn't he a clever old daddy? We're to fly out to Riyadh this afternoon. Isn't this smog awful? The black-in from the burning oil fields was so bad they couldn't see each other across the conference table so they moved the talks out to the desert.

Wouldn't you think they'd confer about what to do about the bad air?!"

Princess Dorothy shrugged, raised her eyebrows in a combined gesture of bemusement and resignation, and waited to see what would happen.

C H A P T E R

S I X T E E N

They had reinstated the charming old custom of propping a fir tree up on the topmost point of a new building as soon as the ridge-pole was in place. In the case of air-filter domes, this ceremonial moment came when the ten-pointed star shape of the final cap-plate was fitted in. The lop-ended tree stalk, secured by guy wires, wobbled a bit in the gritty light wind, then fell over and lay on its side. But the tradition had been enacted.

Inside the dome, five hundred feet down on ground level, the excitement was intense. Ozma herself was there! and away from her feet in every direction radiated the ranks of cheering flowers, all faces turned toward the beaming young queen. It was really a toss-up which was lovelier, the Girl Ruler of All Oz or the legions of anemones, bluebells, cowslips, dandelions, eglantines, freesias, gladioli, hollihocks, irises, japonicas, king-cups, lupins, marigolds, narcissus, orchids, pansies, quince-blossoms, rhododendrons, sunflowers, tulips, umbrella plants, violets, wistaria, xylocarps, yarrows, and zinnias that thronged round her.

In the nine weeks that construction had been under way and as the roomy air enclosure grew steadily more shielded, the fa-

§ See the volume of the same name. Editor's note.

mous Charmed Garden of Oz^s had had time to regain much of its former splendor. Already all mere accumulations of dark soot and grime had been cleansed away and even some of the smaller of the great blackened barren patches of ground had begun to lose their grim dead aspect. Of course your individual small plants, feet enclosed in the revived soil and heads raised in the ever more crystalline-clear air, needed no more than a day or two to spring back to robust beauty.

The garden had become a greenhouse, admittedly, but plants have never been heard to complain of living in a greenhouse. They may miss the rain and the breeze; on the other hand, freedom from freezing and drought is delightful to them—not to mention, in the present instance, release from being smothered in filth. “Speech!” cried the nearer ranks of the Careleaver Kids, and the flowers in their multitudes took up the cry. Of course ALL the plants in the great garden couldn’t talk, but enough of them could to make a difference.

“Speeches are tedious,” observed Princess Ozma, “but let me just say this; The endoming of selected areas in Oz has been so successful that we are enlarging the program.

We had hoped—too sanguinely, we see now—that long before this our roving ambassadors would have sent word that negotiations were in hand which eventually would obviate any wide-spread need of air-enclosure in this country, but, alas, such visions seem as far off as ever. Master Engineer Henkomankatogale starts work next week on the enclosing of the palace and grounds of the Emperor of the Winkies!”

Whistles and cheers split the air. “Speech!” (again) cried Madge Entah, cheerleader of the Careleavers, and others took up the cry. This time it was directed at the young Docent.

The tall blond youth, who had tried, without much success, growing a moustache and beard as signs of maturity and authority, got to his feet. He was new at the game and didn’t think speech-making was quite as tedious as did his Queen.

“My friends—” he spoke—and those who were all-knowing might have recognized in his words a close, if not to say ‘exact’

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, resemblance between his opening gambit and that of a close relative of his in another setting far away and, by now, long ago! The difference was that an expectant hush fell now and his audience were keen to let him talk.

“—and by now you *are* my friends!” Henk insisted. “I don’t know if I’m going to be altogether happy from now on, not working to the cheers of chicory or the applause of apple-blossoms, not to mention the encouragement of eglantine or the goading of gardenias—”

“We rooted for you!” cried some roses.

“You did,” admitted the speaker, “and I’m grateful.”

“What about us?” spoke the stocks. “We stimulated you!”

“We prodded you!” prompted the primulas.

“Well, yes, you did do that,” confessed the engineer.

“We fomented you!” fumed the foxgloves.

“We heartened you,” hollered the hydrangeas.

“We nerved you,” noted the nasturtiums.

“We boosted you,” boasted the begonias.

“We animated you,” added the azaleas.

The lilacs couldn’t find words to express how they had felt, but that they had given their gracious imprimatur to the project no one doubted.

“Now we’re off—” and here Henk turned to press the hand of a striking young person at his side, which hand had somehow got tucked within his elbow. “—my team and I. Not to forget my genial mentor —” Here the speaker turned to bow to Dr. Em. Wogglebug, who occupied a seat of honor on the platform. More cheers drowned out the rest of the introduction.

“Word has come that the tin castle of the great Emperor, His Majesty Nicholas the First, is in a state of collapse, attacked by hydrogen sulphide, ammonia, carbonic acid gas, and a variety of salts, all familiar ingredients of our atmosphere. In the west of our land these vapors have become a little *too* familiar. We must act now or it may be too late ...”

Henkomankatogale spoke for another five minutes, but the attention of his sovereign wandered to the young person at the

speaker's side. They had met fleetingly at the opening of the ceremony but the Girl Ruler only now had time to study the girl's profile. But surely...? The brunette had been presented simply as the Forewoman in Charge of Works. But surely—was that not General Jinjur?!

Ozma's mind flew back to a time now nearly a century past when she (herself performing in a totally different persona, name, and sex) had had dealings with an imperious young woman who looked for all the world... But hadn't Jinjur later become Captain of Sorceress Glinda's palace guard? Was she that no longer?

The princess had to admit to herself that she'd lost track of the amazon for going on half a century, but that she should (without looking a day older) have become a hard-nosed (as well as -hatted) construction worker did not really surprise Ozma. Curious, the turns of destiny. The former threatener of the peace of Oz—and little Dorothy's son! Where might that friendship lead?

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

The Tin Woodman knew the crow Kaggi-Karr well enough by now. She'd been making a delightful pest of herself for weeks. Sometimes he wondered if it wasn't time for her to go back to her alternate time strand, but he couldn't deny that she cheered him up and with her around the hours did steal past less like lazy cattle than they had done before.

But now suddenly the roles were reversed. It began one day when Kaggi couldn't find her pal, the Round Robin. There'd been a little tiff. Flatteringly (to the crow), R.R. had displayed little signs of jealousy because K.K. spent *all* her time in the company of the emperor. That, and the fact that the smog-laden atmosphere was getting on the nerves of both the outdoor-loving avians. High words had flown, and then so had the birds.

Kaggi went to her eyrie, a disused stovepipe opening in the upper wall of the kitchen. There she settled down with feathers flounced and eyes half hooded. She must do something for that pesky robin. After all, she was very fond of the jerk, quirky and know-it-all as he might be. But what? She'd have a good think about it

Then she had it! Suddenly it came to her, in the dead of day. She'd revive her Bird Messenger Relay Service—and R.R. could be the co-ordinator. Kaggi scarcely stayed to rough in the

outlines of her scheme before squawking: “Fregosa! Where’s the Round Robin?!” The cook’s name was not ‘Fregosa’. That was the cook in the Yellow Castle in the alternate-universe Oz, but Kaggi didn’t pay any attention to that difference.

“Search me,” said the Compleat Cook mildly. Since he’d cleaned up his act, the awful People Eater of earlier days^s and other time strands^{ss} had found gainful employment in the service of the Winkie emperor—who, in that other Oz had been the People Eater’s murderer! “Better ask Ojo,” Lewdoed ventured. And the crow went to do that.

Ojo, a likeable Ozite who’d gone into total retirement once a book had been named after him, had come *out* of retirement when he observed what a good thing another young sprout named Number Nine had made out of being majordomo to President Scarecrow. He determined to seek a similar position in the castlehold of the genial Tin Woodman—and the Woodman, being so genial, had hired him.

“Search me,” said Ojo mildly in his turn. “I saw him last, oh, more than an hour ago. He said, ‘I’m going out—and I may be some little time.’”

Chill foreboding gripped the crow when she heard those fateful words. She rushed to a window (what was left of it) and peered out. But of course in the all-pervading smog she could see nothing.

In her alarm and unease she went and perched on the Woodman’s spare (inadvertently) leg and relieved her worry in chat until such time as R.R. might turn up again. Unfortunately, he didn’t. The crow’s discomfiture, deepened into depression. Nick Chopper, unable to bear the sight of suffering creatures, especially dumb animals—and even ones so little dumb as the crow—went all out cheering her up. In the process he managed very efficiently to cheer *himself* up. But not Kaggi-Karr.

Weeks passed gloomily, then one day Nick announced: “I’ve sent for Henkomankatogale!”

§ See *The Frogman of Oz*.

§§ See *Volshebnik Izumrudnogo Goroda*. Editor’s notes.

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“For *what??*” snapped the crow sulkily.

“You know: Dorothy’s son. He’ll soon be finishing up his dome over the Charmed Garden” (that’s where R.R. had gone, had K.K. but known) “and may be wanting another project to follow it up with. We could certainly do with something of the sort here. I do believe, if I once had my house and self in under shelter from the acid rain I could galvanize my tinsmiths to regalvanize myself, knowing I’d be safe from further corrosion.”

“Oh, what a good idea,” pipped Kaggi-Karr and tried really to care. But when Henk and his work crew turned up -three weeks later and the Round Robin was found to be of the company, Kaggi perked up totally - and then some. She pecked R.R. viciously to show how much she’d missed him, and from then on the crow was on cloud nine.

She took over the endoming of Winkiezia and bossed it to completion. The Woodman emperor’s castle and the small city nearby stood on a sizeable little plateau so here Engineer Henk had to bring his more egg-shaped dome into play. ‘The projects were getting each time immenser.

This fact, and something else, were bothering the young genius. “Everything’s taking too long!” he complained worriedly to his womenfolk: Ms Jinjur and the crow from Alternate—Oz. “It’s great fun, of course, but these installations are getting to be fairly routine. You’re overseeing the operation so efficiently, my dears—” Here a loving hand-clap on the shoulder of his forewoman and a wink for Kaggi-Karr. “—that I haven’t got much to do. It gives me time to worry about Mum. It’s going on half a year! What’s happened to her?! Why don’t we hear something?”

“Princess Dorothy’s doing just fine,” reassured Jinjur. “She has her protective amulet with her. You know that shields her from even the smallest harm.”

“But why don’t we get any news?”

“Rome wasn’t built in a day. Even our—your - domes aren’t! It was known she’d have a tough job talking world leaders into going over to magic power—”

"Say!" broke in Kaggi-Karr.

"What?" said the two humans and looked to the little crow indulgently.

"Sorry. I interrupted you, Ms Jinjur. Go on. Mine can wait."

"I was only going to say; Princess Dorothy's stubborn. She won't report back till she's made some headway. Apparently she hasn't. But what was your thought, K .K .?"

"You mentioned powering by magic," burred the crow, starting to rise on a thermal of enthusiasm. "Why the heck aren't we 'powering by magic' right here?! That'd speed up your project, and give you more time, Docent, to get busy on a couple other little operations."

"Explain yourself, Kags," required the engineer.

"Prof. Wogglebug tells me you designed the air-filter dome construction simply as a blue-print for capable magic-workers to operate from when putting up domes more or less everywhere. So why are you laboriously building them by hand?!"

"I see what you mean." Henk laughed. "Well, I had to make sure in practice that my studies weren't just paper castles. I've had to iron out the bugs - that is, all except *one* bug!—as we went along." Perhaps it was just as well that the Doctor Emeritus was not present at this confab!

"Well, but you've done that by now, dear," reminded Jinjur. "That's the reason the job's gone stale for you."

"Well, so I thought:" said Kaggi-Karr and polished her claws on her lapel, "why don't you turn the construction part over to Sorceress Glinda and that crowd from now on? That'll leave you free to work on two other projects..."

"Which are?" said Henk with a smile of patience.

"The first one will take you—what? a day and a half: plans for the rebuilding of this awful drafty old castle." The crow waved a wing to indicate the zinc-plated sheets that clumsily patched an area where the drawing-room wall had fallen down. They rattled a bit mournfully in the stiffish breeze.

"Great." Henk grinned with real delight at the suggestion.

"I thought perhaps brass next time...?" added the crow. "That

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is, if we can get the Emperor to go along with it. Brass would fit much better the—supposed!—color scheme of this country—as well as not falling down in the first next acid-rainstorm.”

“Though under the dome that wouldn’t play any part now!” reminded the engineer good-humoredly.

“Right. It was just a thought.”

“But, Ms Karr,” resumed Jinjur, “what was your other proposal?”

She told them.

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

Painfully Dorothy crawled along the railroad tracks.

Oh, she wasn't all that exhausted — though she *was* wringing wet and more than a bit disheveled. But it was the gaping gorge below her that made her fail to trust to her footing in tripping blithely along the ties.

Just a couple more yards now. Once more a knee brought forward, once more the hands advanced and clutching at the rails. "One more step, Lao-Tsen!" she encouraged herself, quoting *Lost Horizon* as usual. "One more step."

Played out (well, anyway spiritually), she collapsed when on terra firma again, then crawled to the little railway-workers' hut she had spotted and pushed aside the door. Oh, thank goodness: nothing but grass sprouting through the floorboards, a few empty beer bottles, and some last year's leaves. The fair young princess of Oz drew her soaked burberry about her, crouched in a corner, and fell asleep.

Heaven knows how many hours later it was when she was wakened in pitch dark by the noise of a crash. Whatever!? And wherever?! The racket had not come from her immediate vicinity. She herself was safe from whatever had smashed. But that made the magnitude of the crashing noise even more awesome. It must be on the other side of the river chasm.

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She struggled to her feet and looked out. Brrr! The New Zealand late autumn night was chill. What with the dark and the smog she could see nothing. At least whatever it was hadn't burst into flames. Then in the distance a flashlight gleam shone out with startling brightness and silence. She could see dark figures moving about. There had clearly been a road accident, but there were survivors!

Dorothy's curiosity grew intense. With the greatest caution, remembering the brink on which she perched, she got out on the railroad tracks and tried to see better. Now she made out indistinct voices from over the gorge. The lurching silhouettes seemed to collect themselves and begin to move off in a body. But *down* the road: east. "Oh, the sillys!" gasped Dorothy in exasperation. "There are no towns down that way—or even houses—for miles." Impulsively she cried, "Hallooo! over there!"

The moving light stopped.

"Back up the road!" cried the girl, some might say rashly. Still, *she* was trying to contact the *others*, not the other way around, so she thought she could count on having little to fear from them, whoever the people might be. "Go back up the road! the other way. There are railroad—railway—tracks there. Cross by the viaduct..."

"Indecision gripped the carriers of the lamp but then slowly the light and the scattered outlines of humans began to move back up the road.

Dorothy hollered encouragement. "The ties are really quite broad—wider than the spaces between. Go carefully and there shouldn't be any danger: I'm sorry: I'm too—chicken-hearted to try to cross it again myself... No, really, it's all right. It's only a shallow ditch there; even if anyone fell he wouldn't be hurt." Happily the night was too dark and visibility too nil for her thumping lie to be evident. "There's shelter over here!" she urged. "You'll be all right 'til morning."

The figures approaching at a fitful snail's pace along the tracks were gradually revealed as those of men. When the one in the lead, back-lighted by the torch carried by one of the middle

figures, got close enough to stretch out an arm to her, Dorothy still could not recognize him as Arbol Cortador, a Winkie wood-cutter. He recognized *her* and broke into hysterical sobs of what sounded more like laughter than tears. The other five woodmen came the closest they had done to falling into the ravine out of sheer marvel when it was borne in on them what had taken place.

Dorothy got them into the hut, where there was just barely sufficient room for them all to sit squeezed together on the floor and talk all the rest of the night.

When the one incredible fact had imprinted itself on the woodmen's consciousness: that Princess/Dr. Dorothy Choggolak was impossibly *there* (having arrived by hitch-hiking),

in the dark middle of nowhere, with them, the next most important revelation was that the driver of the woodmen's mini-bus was dead and they themselves badly shaken. Near-death (of course they couldn't completely die) of exposure and exhaustion on the deserted road might well have been a possibility for them if they had not found shelter with their friend.

"But where in the world were you coming from?" pleaded the girl.

Arbol Cortador made as good a spokesman as another. "There's a camp meeting of the Seventh Day Witnesses at New Copenhagen tomorrow. The people at Auckland thought we ought to make an appearance there. I don't know; we've given up trying to exercise any sort of control over where they send us—"

"Oh, the same thing with me!" wailed Dorothy, and this time the sob was one of pure distress. "Isn't it terrible? Nothing's gone as I thought. I've been shoved about from pillar to post. I've seen nobody that was any use. The nearest I got was the Prime Minister of the Seychelles and he thought I was trying to sell beauty preparations to the island girls!"

"The Seychelles'?" echoed Skog Vedhuggar, who thought she had said 'sea-shells' and had to have a little lesson in geography before they could go on.

"We spent weeks at a vocational school in Goroka, P.N.G.,"

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related Arbol. "We arrived there to find we were engaged to teach a six-weeks crash course in Forest Management. We had no choice but to stay. We were turned back whenever we tried to make a break to the airport or the harbor."

"Don't I know!" laughed Dorothy half hysterically. "The same thing with me. I got railroaded to Oman, where at first they were indignant because I wasn't wearing my yashmak and then decided I was the highly recommended English schoolmarm who had come to cure illiteracy in the emir's harem!"

The friends sat crammed together in their cabin and talked the night away, regaling each other with accounts of all that had seemed awful at the time but that now they could afford to laugh at - a little.

"But what about this bus accident of yours at the last?" insisted Dorothy. "Are you sure you're really all right, all of you?"

And your poor driver! How dreadful. Are you sure...?" she said again and broke off. "He's dead?" someone replied. "I'm sorry; the driver's seat took the brunt of it. He's wedged in; trapped - and unconscious, if not worse. I'm just awfully afraid—"

"We should have stayed there!" insisted Bûcheron Arbrisseau. "I said so."

"The first passing motorist will stop," reassured another, "and then go for help. Must've happened already. And what could we do? freezing out there on the road?" They rationalized. One must, when the chips are down, to guard one's own well-being. The physical entity fights to survive, cost what it will in mental anguish. Talk fell off at long last and they were subsiding into exhausted slumber.

That was broken into by cheery singing. "What in the world?" said Skog and stuck a rumpled head out the door. In the sooty pre-dawn he could nevertheless make out the figures of two - three... no, four! male individuals picking their way northward along the railroad tracks.

"Oh, no, this is too much. This isn't happening!" gasped the Ozite, withdrawing his head into the but again to stare at the

groggily waking others with big eyes.

"What is it?" barked Bûcheron.

"You're never gonna believe this," said Vedhuggar.

"I don't. But you hear a dulcet voice caroling across a crowded room?"

"I hear. somebody singing—outside—if that's what you mean."

"Don't you recognize the voice? It's Forrest Sawyer."

Yes, it was. After they all got through screaming at the unbelievability of it all, Forrest explained: "We've just come from Antarctica. Yes, I know about the ozone hole; we've probably got every known form of cancer by now. But the Hollow Earth people don't believe in that. We fell in with some of them at Valparaiso. They were on their way to prove there's an entrance to the hollow interior of the Earth at the south pole. The idea was to lead a pilgrimage of humans who would survive the smog pestilence inside the earth and live to repopulate the planet after everyone else was dead. There are vast virgin forests in the inside of the earth, you see, and we were to be in charge of lumbering operations there - to build houses."

"And did you find it?" the hut-occupiers all asked, fascinated.

"Well, no - but the entrance is there!" The Hollow Earthers seemed to have made one convert anyway. "But somehow our plane overflowed. We landed at Queen Maud Land, and then the mission seemed to fizzle out. We were all left to get back to civilization the best way we could."

"Here in N.Z. they just thought we were nuts," Legno Tagliabosco took up the tale, "—oh, not as Hollow Earthers, but when we told them we were from Oz! We've been pretty much on our own. Now we're trying to work our way up to Auckland. Mr. Fatte refused to see us at Wellington. There seemed nothing left to do but try to cadge a plane ride somewhere from the international airport."

"This," announced Dorothy Choggolak "is a miracle. That's all. Or rather: it's proof of our magic - and nobody but us to see it!"

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“How do you mean, Dorothy?” asked Waldo Baumschneider, registering sympathetic concern.

“Well, don’t you see?: it’s a sign from On High! that our effort is bound to succeed. We were brought back together *for a purpose*—so we wouldn’t despair and go home in disgrace.”

No one had known before that the princess believed there was anyone On High, but this seemed to indicate it.

“So what do we do now, Princess?” asked Woody Hackett.

“Let’s discuss it.”

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

It was the turn of the Sticky Twins to feel a bit out of it. Since they'd been endomed and the endoming crew had gone on their way, life had seemed a bit dull. All their flower visitors had flocked off, of course, to follow the progress of dome-building at their own Charmed Garden and there was nobody left to talk to except each other and Aloysius Pussy.

"I wish we could take in lodgers," said Fweetie over a morning treat of pepper steak and green persimmons.

"We've got the space for it; I'll give you that," admitted Thyugar. "Since this dome's here, it's like all outdoors is part of the house. There might as well be people sleeping out there: all fine and dry, and not cold."

"Oh, you thought 'people', did you?" said Fweetie, spreading marmite on crack-bread. "I was thinking rather plants. If we could get a crowd of the Careleaver Kids to come back and settle here..."

"They couldn't," objected Thyug. "As I say, outside is as dry as inside. Haven't you noticed it never rains through? The grass is getting all brown out there - which is better than black, I suppose: But I don't think Mr. Mankatogale's scheme is working right. It's supposed to filter out the dirt but not all the weather completely."

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“Well, it was his first project. Looks like he hadn’t quite perfected that feature of it.”

“Anyway, I’m game,” conceded Thyugar. “Plants, people.. animals. Whatever. How’ll we go about it? Put ads in the *Ozmapolitan*?”

“Say, that’s not a bad idea! But I was thinking; maybe we could go see Glinda—”

“Go see’?! Are you starkers? I’m not venturing out in that filth beyond the dome. Look!” Thyug waved a viscid hand through the breakfast room window (now always, blessedly able to be left open). “Beyond the dome? It’s gone completely black out there, or else a very very very dark green. We’d be just impacted dirt balls by the time we got to the Ruby City.”

“You’re right, you know.” Fweetie gave his sister a sticky kiss. This was to indicate that there were no hard feelings because a female had assessed a situation righter than a male. Yes, unlikely as it seems, the twins still had sex—I mean, they still possessed distinctions of gender—though having gone completely glycid.

“Will you phone, Fweetie darling?” said Thyugar, being sweet in her turn.

“Oh, er..Glinda? Sure thing.” Going to the telephone, Fweetie scraped off with his breakfast fork some of where they had used the instrument the last time and rang through.

“B. Jones speaking,” spoke a voice.

“Hi, Bucky. Fweetie McCloy here. Say, is Glinda available?”

“Just a sec.” And indeed it was not much longer than a sec before the genial enchantress’ voice was heard.

“Your Highness?” said Fweetie subjectively. “Sis—you remember; Thyugar McCloy?—and I were thinking; now that we’ve got this snazzy dome over us keeping out all the harmful impurities—well, maybe it’s kind of selfish of us to have it all to ourselves. So we were wondering: have you got any plants that need a home—or animals? Well, or people, if it came to that...”

“Why, Fweetie, what an astonishing thing. Within the half hour I’ve had Princess Ozma on the wireless hook-up. She says

a crowd of young children—I think she said thirty-four! —have arrived in Oz. Well, not exactly ‘in’; they’re at the Mirror Gate. You know?: at the Unnikegwick border. She’s on her way down there and I’m to join her. Obviously we can’t turn the little mites away just like that. They’ll have to be given at least temporary shelter. I couldn’t think what to do; some kind of displaced-persons camp out on the desert? But now, your proposal—well, it really does seem like an answer to prayers. What do you think? Could you cope with thirty-four tiny tots? Isn’t it the queerest thing? They arrived in a bus! It makes you think of Mrs Carmichael, doesn’t it? And now that I mention her: *She* might be able to have a few at her boarding house. But what I meant to say; the bus didn’t get blown here in a tornado or anything. It drove across the Great Sandy Waste! Apparently it took them weeks; the kiddies were a bit vague about that—and there were no adults among them. It seems the driver just deposited them there and turned around and headed back. Frankly, Ozma isn’t altogether pleased. It’s so inexplicable; maybe it’s just the merest fluke; but the Princess did say, ‘What if this were just the thin end of the wedge?’

It’s true; what if now somehow crowds of people can just start turning up in Oz at random? I would say it’s kinder to be cruel. We really can’t have just unlimited immigration. Just for now, however, we’re going to have to come up with a solution as to where to house these little things. Ozma says they are rather pitiful. They don’t look as if they’ve eaten all that regularly while they’ve been on the road. Ozma’s taking along the makings for a cream tea with strawberry short-cake; they’ll have a little welcoming party there under the palms. Her informant, Till Orangespiegel, says they’re being as good as gold! Not a one has been naughty or had a crying fit. Till gets the impression they’re making a superhuman effort. They seem terrified they may not be let in and they’re trying awfully hard to behave. It’s not right for children, is it? They ought to be having a good time, laughing, playing, maybe enjoying a few sweeties. Oh, as for that, I don’t think you and Thyugar need feel at risk at all. We’ll

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warn the children you're not to be eaten - not even tested! Still, it might not be a bad idea, if you're going to have them - and to avoid temptation!—to lay in a supply of eatables other than tabasco tarts and quinine custard. So what do you think? Feel like trying?"

Then the Queen of the Quadlings waited to hear what Master McCloy had to say.

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

“Isn’t it too annoying!?” Kaggi-Karr was as mad as a wet hen. “That pesky dragon refused to come! I’ve never heard of such a thing. ALWAYS before he’s gone along with the idea when Elli—I mean, Dorothy—needed fetching and carrying to and from the outside world. But can you imagine?: he balks at first having to make the switch to an alternate-universe Oz and *then* venturing out into the great world. That last part’s what he’s really afraid of. I *told* him creatures from Ozzes live a charmed life, nothing can happen to *them*—but no, he didn’t want to risk it.”

“What,” said Henkomankatogale, “are you going to do in that case? I suppose—er, we do still want to make the attempt?” He didn’t sound all that sure.

“Darn tootin’!” squawked the crow. “But I’m afraid it’s back to the drawing board for you, Docent. But look!” Belatedly the queen of the Bird Relay Service brought forward a bunch of little men who were standing, hats in hands, looking abashed. “I brought these along instead. This is Lestar—” The crow went to perch on the shoulder of a grey-bearded little fellow in a purple kaftan. “He’s the leading artisan craftsman back in the Violet Country over there (that corresponds to the yellow—that is, brown—one here). And there are his crew. That’s Tejllicle, his

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Chief Assistant—and Ezgud Cheeb—and Rovianno—and...” She named the whole seventeen of them.

“They’re all brilliant technicians in various fields. They’ll carry out your orders to a T.”

“Which are...?” Henk managed to smile indulgently.

“Why, in default of that wretched Oyhho, you’ll design and build a flying model!”

“Oh.”

“And listen, we can make this contretemps turn, to our advantage. Instead of a silly self-stuffing live dragon that has to eat a herd of goats every day, our dragon will be hollow! We can all ride inside, instead of in an idiotic little house strapped to its back. Don’t forget; we’ve got to have room for eleven grown people, besides the navigating crew.”

“This is going to hold us up, you know.”

“Yes, a few weeks. I’m as sorry as you are But what would you? There hasn’t been any message yet from Do- your mum?”

“No. I’m badly worried.” That’s why Henk’s indulgent smiles were so tentative.

“So let’s get cracking! Here, Les—” At a sign from Kaggi-Karr the artisan rolled out across the floor the calibrated plans for a creature of the genus *Draconus volkovii*, recast for assembling from wicker and reinforced parchment.

Henk cast an expert’s eye, then exclaimed, “It’s designed already!”

“Not really,” Lestar hastened to reassure. (Everybody in all the Ozzes speaks the same language. Don’t ask me how. That’s one of the real mysteries of faerie.) “We’ve only reinterpreted the skeleton and musculature of the living animal as an exterior framework. But there’s been no testing. We aren’t at all sure where the stresses, the pressures would come in actual flight, what parts might have to be strengthened, or others perhaps done away with—in the interest of lightness, for instance.”

“Oh that won’t be any trouble to calculate,” Henk assured. “But as for the coating fabric; I wonder if parchment’s going to serve? For one thing, the Emperor will—take a dim view—

because of the number of sheep or goats it would take!”

“What would you suggest?” said Lestar, open to suggestion and greatly interested. “What about paper-thin tin? The local tinsmiths would love to get into the act on that. As for the increased weight, we could possibly make savings elsewhere.” The engineers were in their element and moved off, followed by the other new arrivals, to the mechanical workshop to which Emperor Nick had had the former ballroom converted when the palace was rebuilt (brass with tin decorations!). *They* would be having fun for a while.

Chief Assistant Jinjur was perhaps less delighted. She had arrived on the scene of Kaggi-Karr’s expected but not exactly pin-pointed return from Alternate-Oz a few minutes late and in the absorption of the study of Lestar’s plans nobody had introduced her. Now she watched the crowd of men herd to the doors and had very mixed feelings. Should she stamp her foot and throw a fit? No, that’s what a silly woman would do, and Jinjur was concentrating on showing that women were every bit as worthy as men and consequently not given to temper tantrums and demands for special attention. Well, okay, as good as a man she’d follow along to the laboratory just casually, like she belonged there.

No, damn, that was no good either. Here were all these midgets stopping and gaping at her like she had two heads. And there was the chief, turning, looking back, blushing, and starting to stammer, “Oh, er, Master Lestar, let me have the pleasure of introducing—er, oh, my fiancée, Miss Jinjur...”

The numbskull! Why couldn’t he say “This is my gang boss”—short and sweet—“she runs the show for me”!? But even then!; why did it have to be “she”?! The language forced one to it. It was ruddy unfair! There ought to be a third-person pronoun that referred to creatures without regard to sex, where sex made no difference.

Jinjur stood still and shook hands mechanically when the eighteen Alter-Ozites filed past solemnly and paid their respects.

Then she said, “Refreshments! You all will be wanting some-

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thing after your journey from afar. Beer? Wine? Mineral water! And snacks. I'll bring a tray."

And she turned and marched the other way, toward the kitchen.

Kaggi-Karr flew after her and perched on her shoulder. "Well done, sir!" said she.

And then; "I'm sorry we haven't got a word for 'sir-regardless-of-sex' ..."

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

"Quite pretty round here, isn't it? That is: it would be if you could see it."

"Mmm. And we might get a lift if anyone could see US!"

"Oh, I think they do - but only just as they pass us and then it's too late to stop."

"I suppose they don't dare, the traffic's so thick; they'd get rammed from behind."

"And yet at night there's hardly *any* traffic."

"The visibility, buddy! If we can hardly see our hands before our faces for smog by day, at night I guess they can't move faster than a snail's pace, so very few bother. That of course makes daylight traffic all the thicker."

"Still, you'd think someone *might* give us a lift. Was your luck as awful as this, Dorothy, coming up the valley?"

"No! It went very nicely, one ride after another, until evening came on *and* it started to rain. People never pick up people in the rain—just when they need it most!"

"Well, why don't *we* get a ride? It's been hours! and not a one."

"Use your head, Albero! There's eleven of us. Who's got room for that many passengers?"

"I suppose we might split up...?"

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"Not on your life! That's the one thing we're *not* going to let them do to us again. Otherwise we'll never get back to Oz."

"So I guess it's just hammer, hammer on, down the hard highway..."

"Oh, look, the sun's coming through!... I suppose that *is* the sun, that dark cherry-colored thing?"

"Yes, that's the sun."

"And look, boys, it *is* 'pretty around here'. I can actually see - oh, almost miles. Those are mountains over there! and purple."

"And with the sun that little lake is almost blue."

"What about this yellow grain field right by the road?"

"And the green one across the way. And—oh, look!—that plowed-up part down there. The soil is red!"

"Oh, good heavens!"

"What is it Dorothy? Dear me, you've gone quite pale."

"Does this remind you of anything?"

"Well-l, the red earth of Tara perhaps?"

"How green was my valley'?"

"Purple mountains' majesty'?"

"Oh, no nothing as literary as all that. But think ... The colors!"

"Oz!!"

"Of course! And I know where we are now! At least, I'm almost certain. It must be the same place..."

"As what?"

"You must all have read it too. One of the leading Oz chroniclers visited New Zealand and wrote that he'd come to a place that he recognized at once as Oz—well, almost—because of the colors. Here they all were, all at one time, and nothing artificial about them. Of course in those days colors everywhere were so much brighter. Don't forget there are half as many people again in the world as there were then, and an even greater proportion now of dirt and pollution... But this must be the very place..."

"Gee..."

"Wouldn't it have been wonderful if they had stopped right then?: frozen population and industrial development and—oh,

everything -that makes life dreadful now.”

“Mmm, it must have been quite a paradise then. Even as short a time ago as the end of the eighties there were still many quite nice places—almost clean...”

“What do you mean: ‘must’? It *was* a paradise in those days. We were alive then! We can remember how grand it was. And the further back you went in time, the more paradisaical.”

“Oh, stop it! It’s making me so homesick I could scream. Oh, how I wish I were back in Oz!”

“Shh! Don’t say that. You might find yourself back there before you intend—”

“There’s no danger, Bûcheron. You know you’ve got to twist your ring and rub the amulet at the same time.”

“There are other ways to get to Oz.”

“Yeah, but those are secret. We’ve sworn not to use them, to just forget we even know about them.

“Uh-oh!”

“What?”

“What’s he looking; so ghastly about?”

“I forgot... I just remembered.”

“And you other guys; ‘what’s got into you?’”

“We told.”

“You what?”

“We told some kiddies how to get to Oz.”

“Some’? We told everybody we met for a while there.”

“Oh, no, you never—!!”

“We did. It was when they dug us out after that plane crash. We figured we were dead, or near to, and all bets—and vows—were off. We talked pretty loosely about where we were from, and how we wanted to get back there if we only could.”

“I don’t suppose they paid any. attention anyway, did they? Nobody ever seems to.”

“I’m afraid they did. Anyway the kids. They loved the idea. Of course they never heard of Oz. But when we blabbed the magic words, they loved saying them over after us. Some of them made notes when we talked about how you could get there both

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by land and by sea, if you knew the right passes to make.”

“Oh, well, never mind. Nobody in this outside world *really* believes in magic.”

“Unfortunately they do—by now. Some of them anyway.”

“What do you mean?”

“None of us can work any visible magic!”

“Our button-holes.”

“Button what’s?!”

“Yes, Dorothy, you remember; when we met the Careleaver flowers that time. Each one of us woodmen picked a button-hole. I see you’re all still wearing them too. My nasturtium blossom here—and Woody’s cornflower—”

“And my carnation!”

“Well. . . ? ”

“Well, they overheard us talking to them.”

“So what?”

“Some of the kids, especially the little tiny ones ... ”

“Yes?”

“Well, *they* could hear the flowers talking back.”

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

The two queens held a hasty session of the Emergency Council of All Oz (or E.C.A.O.) at Glinda's palace.

Normally Oz is governed by fiat. There is no popular assembly. By no stretch of the imagination could Oz be called a democracy. As Alexander Volkov winningly expressed it; "Somehow leaders were chosen without recourse to tedious elections." Whatever Ozma took it into her dear little head to do was law.

However, just occasionally, a problem would crop up that even someone who looked like a ten-year-old girl couldn't solve off the top of her head. This seemed to be one of the occasions.

The busload of children from Canada had been efficiently settled with the McCoys, nor was anything more said about their being required to leave Oz. Then Johnny Doit's sandboat arrived at one of the formal frontier entry gateways crammed with little people Johnny had spotted wandering on the Impassable Desert. He thought that was it, but the very next week more refugees were found out on the sands, even—rather horrible to relate—some badly desiccated small corpses; that was on the fringes of the Deadly Desert, a part of the great wilderness that had always proven fatal to trespass upon.

At that Queen Ozma organized a patrol of volunteers to man ozoplanes to keep up a round-the-clock vigil along the borders

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of the really lethal parts of the deserts. It simply wasn't possible to permit anyone to actually die while trying to get to the fairyland. Still people seemed to be arriving from all directions, and, of course, if you knew the right gestures and procedures, you didn't have first to pass through the outer ring of small countries on the Oz continent in order to get close to the central magic land. Soon Doit had equipped a whole fleet of sandboats which made regular scheduled runs across the various deserts, transporting refugees.

The E.C.A.O. was to take a look at the big picture and what it entailed for Oz. All the leading policy-making figures in the fairyland attended. Including various kings and rulers of minor constituent lands within Oz, the number of the delegates came up to 106. That ought to be sufficient to decide what was right for the country, thought Ozma.

While unlimited amenities still obtained, Glinda served a glittering buffet. Who knew when rationing might have to be enforced? if the country was to be flooded out with new arrivals.

Perhaps it was the tastiness of the dainties that had an o'erswaying effect. Of course no one actually said so but the thought must have struck a good many of the delegates: 'Despite the smog things are still pretty wonderful in Oz. But how wonderful is it going to be if the country is covered solid with tent cities from border to border?' So when it came to a roll-call there was a resounding majority for closing the frontier hermetically from midnight of that very day.

"All right," said Glinda to Ozma at eleven-thirty that evening, as reports flowed in that the cordon sanitaire had been efficiently established. Ozoplanes with every facility for telescopic viewing were doing a twenty-four-hour patrol of the Oz periphery. Sandboats loaded with armed immigration personnel were primed to dash in wherever strangers might be observed trying to breach the frontiers. "That takes care of those who arrive in vehicles or on foot from across the surrounding deserts," went on the Sorceress. "What about those who turn up by magic

within the country itself, without benefit of border crossing?"

"Oh, goodness," said the little fairy ruler. "I never thought of that. But what—? Surely you don't think...? No one's arrived that way yet!"

"No, but they will," warned Glinda sombrely. "Those dear but dopey woodmen as I fear, sooner or later will reveal to somebody just how easy it is to get here without any laborious preliminary land or sea journey. And when they do—"

"But, Glinda, the woodmen would never be so mad as to part with their rings and amulets, the only means for them themselves to return to Oz when the time comes."

"My dear Princess," rebutted the sorceress. "They don't have to *part* with their talismans."

"Oh, great heavens, of course not!" Ozma stared aghast, with big eyes, after doing a swift mental recap and realizing that, in deed, you didn't have to "part with" a wishing ring for its magic to be effective. As for the complementary amulet, all one had to do was *reach across* and stroke it. She began to giggle almost hysterically.

"Your Majesty!" said Glinda, alarmed. She didn't think she'd ever seen the Girl Ruler in such a taking before. "You really mustn't give way."

Ozma fumbled in her sleeve for her green lawn handkerchief and wiped from her eyes tears of real merriment. "I just happened to think," she gasped. "You know this rather whimsical scheme of the group at Winkiezia? To send a pre-fag dragon to the outer world to 'save' Dorothy and the ten woodmen? I've been very sceptical about the plan, and, in point of fact, have not as yet given permission for any such launching. Now I'm going to! - immediately. But the goal of the expedition will be another: not to save the woodmen, but to save us *from* them!"

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

In the end the Docent almost completely redesigned the inflatable dragon. That is: it now *became* inflatable, rather than wing-powered as originally envisaged. The thing was that the engineer wanted, from the first, to build a mechanism that was technologically capable, on its own, of doing what it was intended to do. If the device was to be merely magic-powered, you might as well, just get Fairy Ozma to *wish* the rescue party, tout court, to the outside world and have done with it.

That put no strain on Henk's mechanical-creative skills—and he *wanted* to put strain on them. He meant for the dragon to get where it was going on its own—and back again. He redrafted from scratch. He got rid of the vast wings. Constructed of bamboo and tin and designed to *fly*, they were totally impractical. Their weight was all out of proportion to their tensile strength. At the least undue exertion or unforeseen strain, one of them, if not both, would break loose, and even in Oz a one-winged flier cannot fly.

He kept vestigial wing excrescences as stabilizers—and to be a small reminder of the dragon that had been envisioned—but inflated the huge rounded *body* of the beast with ozogen, and Oyhho II became the last of the lighter-than-air craft. Head and claws, back-fin and tail, all appeared, and functionally, in

the modified flying machine. Henk conferred with Jinjur, Kaggi-Karr, Professor Wogglebug, and finally with the Emperor as to whether, in addition, the structure should be given life. No, they decided, that would just complicate things. The visitors from Oz to the outside world were having a credibility crisis as it was.

One vital activity the local tin-workers were called upon for and that was to throw up a great metal hangar to house the beast/engine. There on a day in the late spring the finishing touches were being applied when an urgent message from the Queen in the Emerald City arrived: "Ambassadors to outer world require transpo; prepare for immediate departure to meet them."

What had happened was this (as Princess Dorothy retailed it later): "We'd got ourselves to Auckland at last and checked into a cheap hotel. We didn't know how we were going to pay for it but we'd worry about that later. I'd had a bad shock. The news of what those four had done and the thought that perhaps even at that very moment hordes of outer-worldlings were besieging Oz made me desperate to talk to Ozma.

"We had of course the usual arrangement: at six each evening she'd look in the Magic Picture and see what I was doing. By the way, I don't know *why* she didn't remind the people at Emperor Nick's that that was the case. I'm sorry to think young Henk was so worried he was building dragons to come rescue me. Ozma could have relieved his mind at any moment. Admittedly, she didn't have anything very encouraging to report of us but at least she knew we weren't dead or in a dungeon.

"Actually after the first two or three days in America I didn't look out for the daily 'view-in' by Ozma. It was too depressing. But the evening of that day back in Auckland I did. I must have talked for hours! had a complete orgy of confessions about what a total flop our mission had been, how everyone was terribly polite and overwhelmingly generous and hospitable but that we just never could get one responsible person to take us seriously or listen to our tale as if it *were* anything but the eeriest fairy tale.

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“The Picture doesn’t relay sound, of course, but over the years we’d got around that problem. Whenever Ozma was going to have a pre-arranged six o’clock look-in she’d have one of the people from the Anti-Deaf League^s with her, who could lip-read. The person(s) being viewed couldn’t be absolutely sure which angle the picture would pick him up at. Personally, I don’t know why, but I always thought if I faced *East*, then I was facing into the Picture. But anyway—if you could get *to* one! —you tried to talk into a big picture mirror. That way you doubled the chance that the Magic Picture would pick up your lips head-on.

“Well, there was a fine big looking-glass in my hotel room and, as I say, I chattered on for hours. Naturally I couldn’t receive any message back. I could *tell* whoever was viewing but I couldn’t *ask*.

“So what I did was this: I said, ‘Ozma, we’re all *depserate* with longing to get back to Oz. But this mission! I *won’t* give up without one more try. We’re going to the American. consulate tomorrow and throw ourselves on their mercy: claim we got rolled and they took our passports and everything. Once back in the United States I—we, of course—will make our way to Washington.

I know this Najeeb Koxden by now. She’s a bit of a dimwit but very amiable. I’m going to get her to arrange *one* more interview with the President.

““He was very sweet last time. Oh, he loved hearing all about you—and the Scarecrow and Jack Pumpkinhead and everybody. But I was hampered by the well, known “credibility gap.” What it came right down to was that the president didn’t believe a word of what I was saying. He just thought I was a very nice young lady with a very active imagination—kind of a Ruth Plumly Thompson type.’

“The trouble was, you see, I had no *proof* of anything. The powers that be had decided when we left Oz that we weren’t to attempt any magic on our own. Actually we did have one bit of magic with us, by the purest fluke. The woodmen had their

§ See *An Orphan in Oz*. Editor’s note.

flower buttonholes and of course they were as lively and talkative as ever, months later. (So the boys claimed! I couldn't hear them.) The woodmen saw to it that they were in water every night—well, almost every night—with a little nutrient, so the flowers were feeling no pain.

“But, as proof of anything, that was no good. You see, grown-ups from and in the outer world (like me!) can't hear the flowers. Children could, and that's where all—well, most of—our headaches began. But past - oh, I don't know about eleven years old?—young persons get too sophisticated and the ability to hear the sounds of fairyland disappears.

“Forrest had a good idea. He pointed out to Mr. Koxden that the flowers never wilted, and wasn't that magic? But how were we going to prove *that*? Mr. K. had only our word for it that the woodcutters had been wearing those same buttonholes for weeks and months and they'd never drooped. Of course a busy man like the President wasn't going, to be able to keep one of the flowers in a glass of water for a week and then base a bit of foreign policy on whether it wilted or not.

“No, if we were going to get anywhere at the subsequent meeting I hoped to line up with him, we were going to have to have some big spectacular *proof*.

“So that was how I ended up my marathon spiel to Ozma there in the New Zealand hotel room: by an all-out plea that she send us something—just any little thing, or, preferably, great BIG thing—to prove that magic was real.

“After all, if magic was supposed to save the world, the least it could do was start off by saving eleven small insignificant creatures' credibility!”

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

Ozma's radiogram hadn't been quite ingenuous. In fact, it wasn't transportation the ambassadorial mission required. In a pinch they could wish themselves home to Oz quick enough. However, for the nonce they weren't about to do that. No, what was wanted of the great flying machine (still familiarly called "the dragon") was more complicated than that. Ozma thought she'd better follow up her alert by going to Emperor Nick's in person to explain.

She was of course being kept fully informed as to the progress of construction. At first, as she'd mentioned to her colleague Glinda, she hadn't been at all sure she approved. Whether the dragon would ever be given her permission to take off was a very moot point. But there seemed no harm in letting Dorothy's boy get on with the exercise of his very considerable engineering and architectural talents. When it came right down to it, his dirigible could always be put into service transporting holiday groups around Oz. That is, if the smog ever cleared, so people felt like going sightseeing again. Meanwhile it would be a functional way of getting about for people who *had* to do journeys, despite the smog, between the various domed areas of the country.

When Princess Dorothy's urgent plea came from Auckland

Ozma saw at once how the two projects could be combined. There would be a time lag while Dot and the woodmen carried forward their plans as far as they could. Meanwhile, Ozma would keep her eye on progress at Winkiezia. According to reports, the dragon was about two and a half weeks from completion.

Kaggi-Karr, as self-appointed guiding spirit and, undeniably, ('onlie begettor') of the scheme to build an airship, had always been of two minds about what the flight of the dragon was supposed to accomplish. If the truth were known, it was probably a 'third mind' that motivated her!: the urge to conceive, promote, and ultimately, she hoped, be in charge of a big operation attracting attention throughout Oz. But the two minds she was aware of were: were the Ozites setting off to rescue Dorothy? or were they going to fetch Dorothy so she could rescue them, the people of Oz?!

Traditionally, in Volkovian Oz, the latter was always the incentive when people (most often Kaggi-Karr herself) left the fairyland to bring back the American girl Dorothy (or her alternate-Oz equivalents, Elli or her sister/cousin Emmi/Enni; undoubtedly, if Volkov had lived longer, girls named Eppi and Eqqi would have gone to Oz). Please don't think Oz couldn't do with some saving right now. The dark grey haze that hung over the land was getting as bad or worse than anything Kaggi had known in the days of the Yellow Fog. For one thing, grey was an uglier color than yellow. Furthermore, in the old Fog days, at least Fairy Stella's (Witch Glinda's) rose-colored country had been spared. In the present blight the whole of Oz was affected, the western region worst, so that when the crow looked out the window at Winkiezia what she saw, if not grey-black, was a very very very dark brown.

But of course, looked at sensibly, Dorothy, in being away from the fairyland, was just exactly doing what she could right now to save Oz from pollution. She only planned to return to the country when she had *finished* doing all she could to save it. What might she, more than anyone else, do within Oz to that end?

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No, Ms Kaggi saw that she must play up the “Dorothy’s plight” angle. That was why, when anyone hard-headed - like, most notably, Ms Jinjur - would say ‘Dorothy’s all right! Do you think Ozma’s going to let anything *really* happen to her pet out in the outer world?’ (Heavens, Jinjur couldn’t be jealous, could she?!), the crow would dart in and say, “Don’t be too sure! Naturally your queen wouldn’t ‘let’ anything happen. But maybe she couldn’t help it. How great is Ozma’s ability to control anything at all out in the great world? If she’s so all-powerful, why doesn’t she just twirl her wand and stop the pollution out there at the source? In fact, why doesn’t she magically stop it, at least, from blowing in over Oz? It’s obvious there are limitations even to fairy magic. Why, right this moment Dorothy and the woodmen might be in some terrible pickle and Ozma, powerless, is just scared to tell as about it!”

That was usually enough to make everyone press on with all speed to complete work on the dragon. Afterwards of course Kaggi-Karr was always rather sorry she’d thrown possibly unrealistic scares into Henkomankatogale or anyone else who cared.

Now here was Ozma herself, sitting on Nicholas I’s gold state throne (I must confess he had one such, though he almost never used it), holding a little court, and reassuring everyone that Dot and the woodmen were, indeed, in perfect safety. She brought her audience thoroughly up to date on what she’d seen of the girl’s adventures over the last months and especially the gist of the impassioned plea from Auckland.

“So now I’m announcing my blessing on your project,” she concluded—and here she handed down a small edict— “and I urge you to launch Oyhho II as quickly as it possibly can be done. I’ve just had word; at my six o’clock view-in last night I received the message I’ve been waiting for! Princess Dorothy and the men had just come from their interview in the Oval Office. Dorothy was speaking, in fact, from the powder room of a night club just down Pennsylvania Avenue, called the Awful Ovice. Isn’t that amusing? It seems it was the first place she could

manage to get to, to be on her own, by six o'clock.

"The President had been most kind and most condescending. He sent me particular and personal greetings as from one head of state to another—" Here the little fairy's eyes sparkled extra brightly and one felt that even she, on her exalted plane, had been a little thrilled to be noticed in the great world far away.

"It was just as Dorothy had foreseen. Mr. Koxden, as a long-time fan of Oz, was only too willing to believe—if only he could!—in the true existence *and* potency of our magic land. It seems he's read all the Oz books, even the off-brand ones—and some of those are *very* hard to come by these days, having been published in such tiny editions and, in many cases, having been thrown away by the original purchasers as soon as read—"

"How interesting," spoke Nick Chopper from his chair that had been pushed into the throne room. "Did Dorothy say any more about that, your grace?" The others too seemed to be harkening to the Girl Ruler's words with heightened attention.

"About what?" said Ozma, rather pleased than not to have this turn into a symposium instead of remaining a Speech From the Throne. "About Oz books still being written? Yes, they are! and yes, she did. Oh, not in her transmission yesterday but in the course of recent weeks. What did you want to know?"

"Oh, everything!" squawked Kaggi-Karr, every bit as intrigued as the Woodman. "Who's writing them? And are they real? I mean, do they report things that have really been going on in Oz? things founded on conditions and situations reported in the true history of Oz. For instance, the writers don't ignore your own existence, Your Majesty? That's one thing that's bothered me awfully since I 'came over', and discovered how grossly my alternate-universe home diverges from original 'canonical' Oz."

"No, that's all right," said Ozma with a winning smile. "I'm there, right enough. Or should I say 'I'm here'?" The smile became a trill of charming laughter. "As for who wrote—and still writes - them: I don't know who the people are. One's never heard of them. Apparently writing about our land is not a way

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of getting celebrated out in the great world any more. Naturally Dorothy's tried to get hold of some of these latter-day Oz novels - but failed. It almost seems, she says, as if there's a conspiracy of silence about such unaccredited writers. She tried sending in - under her married name, so that the secretary wouldn't think she was someone trying to make fun of them - to join a big, apparently international, Oz club, but her questions about recently written Oz books went unanswered. As it happens, President Koxden has just lent her one he had on his desk. It's called *Toto in Oz*, by Chris Dulabone! You can imagine with what fascination Dorothy's going to be reading that!"

"But the other thing, Your Majesty?" reminded Henk, who was understandably more interested in affairs currently and demonstrably going on in Oz than in matters concocted in the brains of people far away who'd never laid eyes on the magic land.

"The proof?" Ozma knew what he meant. "Quite so. The President would like nothing better than to be convinced. Dorothy mentioned that HE mentioned the parallel with religion. A great many people would no doubt be overjoyed to accept the consolations of religion but it just isn't in the nature of human beings to believe things without, now and then, at least some tiny little shred of evidence. The difference, in our case, is that we can supply the evidence. That's what I want Oyhho II for!"

Her audience broke into a round of applause. All of them were instant in their understanding of what she implied.

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - F I V E

“What should they be, your grace?” asked Glinda.

“That’s what I was hoping you’d tell me “ replied the Ruler of All Oz ruefully. “I’ve been wracking my brain. Of course anything too big is ruled out. That takes care of the Magic Picture as well as your *Glinda’s Book of Records*—”

“Although,” put in the sorceress, “I wouldn’t mind showing that around in various quarters in Dublin, just to indicate how many centuries farther back its records go than anything they’re keeping score on at the brewery.”

Ozma laughed at the sally, but then grew grave again. The two, with their maids in attendance, were on their way home from Wizard Wam’s by swan chariot. Nowadays, of course, the chariot had to be enclosed. Gone were the days of flying about with the wind blowing free through your hair and the sun bringing out freckles. You risked getting your shoes full of soot grains if you tried that. The sun was nowhere to be seen behind the constant undifferentiated pall of near-black that veiled the sky. It was always twilight of a winter’s day in Oz now.

“Wam’s contributions will do very nicely for standard examples of amulets, talismans, charms, periapts, magic wands, and wish-rings,” went on the Southern Sorceress and glanced at the sapphire-and-amethyst crate near their feet. “Whether

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they'll work or not in the outer world remains to be seen. We won't leave it at that, of course. But our own offerings have got to be surefire."

"That's just it, isn't it?" said the fairy princess. "We don't really have any idea what's going to prove effective, and what isn't. Maybe everything will work—well, like a charm! But we can't be sure."

"And have you thought of this?" enquired the red witch. "What if the unforeseen happens and for any reason the dragon doesn't get back? That's why I'm not risking my absolutely most indispensable appliances."

"Nor I," admitted Ozma the Wise. "Just the same, what we send has got to be 'big medicine'. It's just exactly *proof* the outerworlders are wanting. So it can't be mere prestidigitator's tricks and illusions. Magic spells that don't come off would be worse than not trying to make any demonstration at all."

"Anyway, we've got the Garden contingent!" Glinda tried to cheer her friend. "Actually, we ought to be arriving there any time now. Can you see anything that looks like a dome—in the general murk?"

Ozma peered down through the plexiglass bubble but could make out no distinguishing features in the overall blackish-bluish-greenish obscurity of earth, so Glinda had to set her automatic pilot. "You think there's no doubt about the Careleaver Kids' viability out in the world?"

Glinda was pensive. "Dorothy's report was that even a mere sprig or sprout off one or another of the Kids was—well, not walking, of course—but talking sixteen to the dozen just days ago in Washington, five months after having left its 'roots' in Oz. A tiny instance, true, but as resounding a proof of the preternatural as, say, turning a common or garden pebble into a diamond. Yes, I know only the Ozites and suggestible small children heard the plants' voices. But when you get a fully legged troop of amaryllis performing the Waltz of the Flowers, then *everyone* has got to believe."

"I so hope you're right, Glinda," sighed the little queen. Just

then the chariot began on its descent for landing at the small spaceport outside the still almost new-looking dome of the Charmed Garden of Oz.

Ozma stumbled on the jeweled crate as she was about to alight from the chariot and her maid Jellia fluttered about, full of contrition. "Oh, Your Majesty! I'm so sorry! Shouldn't we put that box in the back seat?"

"It's my own foolish clumsiness, my dear," demurred the princess. "No, we wanted to keep the—er, box close beside us. It's very valuable, you know. But the main thing is; we need the rear tiers of seats and the floor for this crowd of walking flowers that's joining as here. I know you'll make them comfortable, won't you? They won't need to be in water for the short trip on to the palace... I wonder where they are? I thought the group would be waiting right at the gate."

"Here comes somebody now," indicated Glinda. Through the transparent double doors at what had been the old wrought-iron gateway beside a country road^s, they could see a multitude of flowering plants swarming forward in disorderly and delightful confusion.

"That's more than 'somebody'," Ozma twitted her friend. "I wonder what was keeping them."

"Doesn't it look nice in there!" riposted the sorceress. "So green and fresh, and all the colors gleaming so brightly. It's only when you compare the two worlds side by side like this that you realize quite how dingy the unendomed countryside has become."

But now the doors flew open and the newcomers felt literally 'gulped' inside as into an air-pocket when the perfectly tempered (always 77 degrees Fahrenheit), faintly flower-scented air of the interior of the domed garden met the chill and acrid effluvium outside.

"Oh, come in, come in!" cried Grace Yuss, a gardenia bush who, on account of her sovereign beauty and peerless scent, had been chosen Queen For the Day on the occasion of the arrival of

§ See *The Charmed Garden of Oz*. Editor's note.

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the great ones. "Somehow we all thought you'd be arriving at the east gate rather than the north. Did you have a nice flight? Oh, isn't it awful out there in the unprotected air! We're *so* grateful for our dome. We none of us would be able to stand it outside any more. But inside; why, it's paradise. It's really *better* than it was in the best of the old times. Now it never rains too much or too little, and it's never colder or hotter than we like. Or if there are some who like it 'too' hot or 'too' cold, they've their own small interior domes with private thermostat. But come, Your Majesties, we've got refreshments laid out under the poincianas. There's seed cake and mille-feuilles and elderflower wine - or branch water, for the teetotalers—"

"Wait! wait, my dear," the Queen of Oz finally had to break in. "It's delightful to be here and we're looking forward to the treats, but first; what arrangement can we make about the crate? out in the swan chariot? It's awfully valuable and we don't want to seem to be careless with it."

"Just leave that to me, Highness," put in Hal Oosineight, a big sturdy rhododendron. "Don't worry your little head about that.

I'll stand guard over it till you get back. Now you go and have a good time." The Careleavers still hadn't learned how to address royalty quite properly.

Well, they did have a nice time. Tall radiocarbon arc lights had been put up in the Garden at strategic points to replace the sun which no longer shone through sufficiently to keep the plants comfortably ticking over. Their light picked out colors brilliantly but was really a little *too* glaring, so the shade of the poincianas was welcome as the two queens sat down to a picnic on the grass. Princess Grace and a bevy of other floral beauties stood about (though ever so ambulatory, the flowers weren't really equipped for *sitting*) and occasionally refreshed themselves with a little of the branch water.

When the royal ladies had eaten and drunk to a sufficiency, young Bess Amy Mucho, a lively Spanish moss, called down from the poinciana; "Your Graces? If you don't mind, there's a

matter some of us have been wanting to take up with you." When the visitors had given their assent, she went on; "It's about these travelers—well, let's face it; refugees - from the outer world. We've been hearing about them from the Sticky Twins and we're frightfully curious. We had another letter only yesterday—

" Here Bess Amy tossed down a square of paper which Witch Glinda cleverly caught, then quickly tried to let go of, but failed.

"Ozma dear, I'll need your assistance," indicated the sorceress, whereupon the little fairy pulled the leaf from her friend's fingers and laid it down - or tried to.

"We'd better do this thing together, I think." Each of the ladies applied one fingertip to an edge of the paper and so succeeded in holding it down and right side up so that they were able to read the spidery handwriting under the half-dried layer of syrup. "It's Thyugar's writing," constated Glinda. "I'd know it anywhere."

"Hi, kids!" went the billet. "Hope you're enjoying your dome as much as we are. Just for laughs, Fweets and I are substituting the word 'dome' for 'home' most everywhere, and it's amazing how it fits. 'Dome, sweet dome', and 'There's no place like dome', and 'Dome is where the heart is'—and even, yes; 'Dome is where, if you have to go, they have to take you in.' Because, we love it so but at the same time we're feeling awfully guilty, thinking of all the poor domeless wanderers on the face of the earth and here are we, sitting snug as bugs and practically just rattling around in our own wonderful dome. We don't even bother going in the house any more except for a spot of cooking—or when it rains. Yes, Docent Henk came over with his gang one day last week and did a quick readjustment, so now our filter system works like it should. It was all done in twenty minutes! I think he said he'd got hold of some magic from the Girl Ruler—

"Here Ozma nodded in confirmation. "—so when he has the technical plans all laid out ready, he just has to pronounce an encantation or something and it's all made real.

"We're so glad we invited that bunch of kiddies from Canada. I must say they've fitted in perfectly. *No* trouble at all. Oh, well

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some of the tiniest ones will act as if we're walking lollipops and try to lick us, instead of bestowing proper kisses. But by and large... Oh, and Aloysius P. is a great favorite with them too. All which makes us ask again; wouldn't you like to have some visitors?! Your dome is so much bigger than ours. I'm sure you could take care of a couple of hundred. Because we hear there are *thousands* camped out on the deserts, hoping to be allowed in—"

The ladies didn't read any further. It was too depressing. "*Tens* of thousands," said Glinda under her breath, "more like." Then there was a longish quietness.

"What about it, royal ladies?" called down Poincy Anna, when she noticed the silence. "Wouldn't it be a good idea to invite some of the people here? It's mostly—well, exclusively—children, I hear. I know they're a terror in gardens, pulling plants out by the roots and playing ball in the flower beds and falling out of trees. But I think among so many there could be sifted out a fair number who might be expected to show a due regard for plants. And if so, why, we'd love to have them."

"Oh, please," begged Ozma. "It breaks my heart to talk about it. It was decided by E.C.A.O. (and we have no higher authority than that) that somewhere the line must be drawn and no one further be allowed in. Oh, we could easily accommodate another ten thousand—with just a bit of a down-grading of amenities everywhere in the land. But after that? Another ten thousand and another ten thousand? until Oz was as overrun and awful as everywhere in the great world? It can't be done. One precious spot there must be kept—for a reminder to earth that once all earth was fair."

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - S I X

Engineer Henk had naturally had the foresight to instruct that the Winkie tin-craftsmen erect the dragon hangar adjacent to the outer dome wall that now sheltered all Winkiezia from smuts and air defilement. The great sliding doors opened OUTside the dome—and while they were open it was made very sure that all other connecting doors inward to the endomement were close shut.

That's where they all were now; at the huge hangar doors, and the dragon dirigible was being nudged along, just barely avoiding scraping the inner roof of the building as it moved forward, partially inflated.

Kaggi-Karr was flying about half demented, stage-managing everything. The others who were to make the voyage were rather subdued. After all, none of them had ever been out in the great world before and they had very little idea what to expect. The ten adventurers (K.K. and her pal the Round Robin made twelve) were Henkomankatogale, his fiancée Jinjur, little bearded Lestar the alternate-Oz craftsman, Dr.Em. Wogglebug (got up again, thanks to Ozma's timely intercession as Oliver Wendell Holmes), the Tin Woodman's steward Ojo, and a gaggle of technicians from both Ozzes, including a capable air-navigator. That still left adequate room in the cabin part of the dragon's

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interior for the group of people they were assigned to air-lift back to Oz. Alas, it did not leave room for the delegation of walking plants who had so been looking forward to the adventure! It was felt in the end that the dear destructible things under foot would be too much to cope with.

The take-off was being staged very quietly. Emperor Nick, on a special mobile platform, was there, of course, but Queens Ozma and Glinda were at home in their own respective green and red palaces, watching the whole thing on closed-circuit T.V. There was to be no bottle of champagne smashed. It wasn't that kind of a gala ceremony. They just wanted to get the whole onerous journey over with and get back home again.

The mayor of Winkiezia made a short speech, just to kill time as the great tanks of ozogen pumped their contents into the vast tin bag. The applause was strictly desultory as, during the last sentences of his address, the travelers were seen to be climbing up the rope ladder into the belly of the dragon. There was a slight air of August 19'74 about the scene as all the participants in the expedition grinned electrically and waved just before disappearing inside. They had to appear as if this trip was just the greatest lark they had ever taken part in, when in fact their hearts were in their shoes.

The ground crew loosened the stay ropes and the vessel began to rise slowly into the zinc-grey sky. From the observation windows the voyagers could see the people on the ground scurrying about and then very soon they were lost to view in the enveloping murk.

Henk was captain, of course, and generally in charge of decision-making, but in practice Koboble, the navigator, did all the navigating. The others just sat in the wicker chairs at the porthole windows ranged round the 'belly' cabin and watched what they could see.

Far far away stretched the brown land of the Winkies, growing just perceptibly darker toward the western horizon. But then as they gained altitude and headed north the distant outer frontiers of Oz came into focus and the viewers were surprised to

see how relatively less dark the sands of the encompassing deserts were.

Docent Henk explained; “The hot sands tend to incinerate a lot of the air-borne particles as they settle down. It’s only the really heavy-metal constituents of the polluted air that manage to survive resting on the desert floor, and that just produces a pale coffee-colored tone over-all.”

But before the airship got out over the desert it crossed a zone of country that was really black. “Oh, great heavens, what’s that?” squawked Kaggi-Karr.

It was her pal R.R. who could enlighten her. He’d been in every nook and cranny of entire Oz since (and before) she made him head of her Bird Messenger Relay Service. “If about a yard of the muck were scraped away,” he stated, “your black would be seen to be purple. That’s the Gillikin country.”

Jinjur had the longest personal memory of Oz events of anyone present (even exceeding that of Professor W.!) and she contributed: “I guess in the days when all Oz was purple the people down there never dreamed that one day black would be the color scheme—and not quite so easy to get rid of.”

Henk added his bit. “It’s quite awesome how the darkening of the landscape advances, isn’t it? I was in the Amethyst City less than a year ago and things were still distinctly violet-colored then: dark but certainly not black.”

“The degree of pollution increases in geometrical proportion, you know,” the doctor emeritus learnedly, “just like population.”

The others were willing to take his word for that, but Ojo got in roguishly: “Eventually there’ll just be one word for the two concepts, won’t there?: *popullution*. They’re really the same thing.”

The dragon dirigible was not out to break any speed records. Its advantages were maneuverability, payload capacity, and the convenience of its lifting agent: once the great gas-bag was filled you didn’t need tons of fuel to keep the vessel airborne. One little magic motor propelled the craft forward, but not at break-

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neck speed.

By the time the dragon was over the land of Ev it had ascended to such altitude that landmarks, nay, the land itself, were not visible below and the travelers never knew when they passed out over the Nonestic Ocean.

Night fell but no stars came out. Planet Earth was enveloped in a pall of grime and you never saw things like stars any more. The moon was visible, when its phase was upon it, but as a dull grey-brown ball. The last love song celebrating the moon was published in 1994. After that the orb had no role to play in matters of matchmaking. Who could get worked up over what looked like a well-turned mud ball in the sky?

Koboble set the controls at north by northeast as they all retired to sleep. Visibility being nil, there was no point in anyone's staying up on "watch". Fortunately it was a period of calm stable weather. They had nothing to fear from storms. As for why the compass setting; it had for quite many decades now been established that the Oz continent (*Sempernunquam*) was not always quite in the same location in relation to other points on the earth's surface. True, the surrounding ocean, the Nonestic, always verged and merged into the Pacific, never any other great ocean, but one never knew in advance, in the case of any particular journey to or from Oz, whether one would discover *Sempernunquam* to be close to Australia or not far from the Philippines—or even connected by a land bridge to Lower California. It was the original free wheeling tectonic plate!

However, given this variable, if, on leaving the continent and once out over the water, you navigated north by east you were sure to strike land at last in a region known to be congenial, at least to North Americans: California or Canada or Alaska. As the 'halfway point' chosen for the upcoming rendezvous with Dorothy and the woodmen was Seattle, that's how Koboble steered.

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - S E V E N

Despite all firm resolutions sworn to in New Zealand the woodmen went on ahead. Dorothy and Ms Koxden (and even Mrs Tubbs and the flock of retainers! who had got into the act again now that Dr. Choggolak had resurfaced in high circles in the continental U.S.A.) would join them at the last minute. But that would be days later and the ten woodmen saw no reason to go on kicking their heels in hot steamy Washington. They boarded the Amtrak for the other Washington.

The fellows were feeling a little sat-on. From an original attitude of misgiving and reluctance about embarking on this venture into the unknown, they had grown quite keen during their weeks spent in the indoctrination course at Sorceress Glinda's palace. They already had their interest in chopping wood to bind them in brotherhood. They didn't really need Woody Hackett (the joker of the group) to go around with a placard on his back reading "Woodmen of the world! Unite!!" They would have quickly organized themselves as a limited company anyway. Forrest Sawyer had gravitated to the position of chairman and each of the guys had some little office. Bûcheron Arbrisseau wrote a fine hand, so he was secretary. Skog Vedhuggar was fleet of foot and became their official "courier". Etc. All for one and one for all, they began to think

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they would manage fine as harbingers to the “great world”.

Hence, it was with some disgruntlement that they learned that Dorothy Choggolak had been named Chief of Mission at the last moment. That was Nick Chopper’s idea, but since it was his idea also that *they* undertake this caper they thought that in raising a protest they would have no more leg to stand on than did the Winkie emperor himself.

Once they got acquainted with the young American princess they had to fall under her spell. I mean, they had no choice, did they? It’s a case of ‘Love Oz; love our Dot’. Or else—.

As for the girl, she thoroughly enjoyed bossing a bunch of men around. What woman doesn’t? But in her enjoyment she was gracious, so the woodmen’s grudging admiration was not long in changing into real affection

Then came that fatal day at San Francisco when the party of ambassadors got split up. That was those durn film publicists’ fault. The woodmen still didn’t understand how the whole operation from the word Go had been delivered into the clutches of that mob,

It just seemed to confirm the American credo that “You can get anything you want if you go after it.” The studio had wanted the publicity tie-in with the release of their new film so of course they were given it. It was the greatest social sin in American life to stand in the way of anyone’s making a fast buck.

Luckily (for the ambassadors) *The Return of the Wizard of Oz* had proved an awful flop, so the publicity department was giving the Ozites a very wide berth now. Somehow the film makers had the conviction that an Oz story line had to be very threatening and gloomy. Of course Baum himself in his maiden flight in Oz had forgotten about “leaving out the heartaches” and had crammed his story with threats by man and beast, kidnapping, imprisonment, deception, and sudden death. Unfortunately it appeared to have been that aspect of Oz that always caught movie people’s imagination and, true to form, *The Return* turned out to be a saga of mental ills, sojourns in dungeons, torture, betrayal, and disillusionment. The fans stayed

away in droves. The situation as regards appeal to genuine Oz lovers was made worse by such strange arbitrary changes in Oz cosmology as having the Wizard turn out to be Uncle Henry; the Tin Woodman and Tik Tok the Clockwork Man were shown to be brothers and their “metal Mother”, a vast robot made of stainless steel, was introduced as a character; and the Gnome King and Ozma led a Pluto-and Persephone existence as man and wife and co-rulers of the magic lands both above and below ground.

The woodmen were pleased. They could board the train in delightful incognito and not a person asked for their autographs. They headed out for Hagerstown.

If, however, they had thought of seeing additional scenery by going the old-fashioned way, they were to be disappointed. The unvarying pall of smoky haze was everywhere. Visibility out the train windows was on an order of about five yards. They could *just* make out objects that crowded close to the way-bed. They changed trains at Chicago. There was no welcoming party at the station. They had four hours to kill and spent them trying to pay a commemorative visit to the Baum homestead. The house proved to have been torn down to make way for a parking lot and there was not even a plaque. The woodmen left town scandalized.

Yet the journey kept on being a sort of Baum pilgrimage manqué. Their train went right through Aberdeen, South Dakota—but it *went* right through. They didn’t get off, fearful of being disappointed a second time.

Then a curious succession of events took place; *very* curious for people involved in an Oz adventure. The woodmen got picked up by floozies.

Four of the ladies, traveling together, entered the pullman where the men were sitting in pairs scattered here and there. As it happened, there was no one else in the car.

First the girls asked for matches and the Ozites courteously complied. Then they asked for cigarettes, but there they drew a blank. None of the men smoked. This made the floozies stare a

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bit, and then Tajar Madera made things worse by launching into a proselytizing spiel, explaining that they were on a mission to combat air pollution and it wouldn't make sense for them to add to the latter.

One of the little bevy named Cindy Lou changed the subject by saying, "You fellas married?"

"Of course," chorused the woodmen.

"That's good," said Harriet with an air of increased confidence. "We wouldn't want to waste our time on guys your age who *weren't* married."

"Waste your time'?" echoed the naive Albero Boscaiolo.

"Why, yes," said Monique. "We were hoping to get better acquainted with you."

"That's fine!" said Albero and grinned broadly. He thought the ladies were awfully nice. There were no floozies in Oz. "Are you traveling far?"

"All the way from Philadelph-eye-ay'," sang one of the girls, "and on to Oregon. We're breaking into new territory."

"How appropriate!" said Bûcheron A. "Several of our friends at home are from Philadelphia, and another one or two from Oregon. This must be old-home week for Oz!"

"Oz'?" said Janine, who hadn't spoken before. "You mean like 'Over the Rainbow'?"

"Well, yes, that too."

"I thought that was just kid stuff."

"Not a bit of it," puffed Woody Hackett indignantly.

"What's the connection?" asked Harriet. "What's with 'Oz'?"

"We're *from* there," boasted Albero.

"Go on!" said the women and just stared.

"We are."

"Oz?! There's no such place."

"What do you wanna bet?"

Monique took over. She was perhaps a notch or two cleverer than the other girls and indeed was their spokeswoman. "Are you men claiming to come from a place everybody knows is imaginary?"

"It is not imaginary!" The spokesman for the woodmen took over. "That's what we've been trying to persuade people of for months. Oz is *real!* and we're *from* there."

"Go on," said the girls again. All thought of a pick-up had been left on the tracks miles behind. None of them had ever come up against anything quite like this. Though their customers often gave false addresses at least they tried to make them *seem* credible. "Can you prove it?" insisted the ladies.

"Yes!"

"Well—er..." "Sure we can." "Well, we could if—"

"If what? "

"Ladies," said Spokesman Forrest, "do you believe in magic?"

"Of course not!" They all gave him a horse laugh.

"Well, let me put it this way: Would you *like* to believe in magic?"

"Of course!" they all chorused and with even more conviction than before.

"We can do a test then." Forrest thumbed his buttonhole, where little Eva Poreight nodded modestly, a charming pink. "These flowers are alive." His friends were also showing their boutoniers. "I mean really alive. They can talk!"

"You're kidding," stated the floozies.

"Quite often children can hear them—even here, in America. You might be able to, as well. How about trying?"

Harriet looked perfectly willing and Forrest signed for her to move her head near his chest. Nothing averse, she laid her head right on it. For a moment a thought raised its head from the tracks. The train whizzed on. Harriet listened.

"I can hear your heart beating," was her verdict. "That's all."

Now everybody got into the act. Each lady had two breasts apiece, and more. To lay their heads on, that is. 'Unfortunately nobody heard any still small voice. The experiment was a flop.

Monique stared out the window disgustedly. It was getting dark(er than usual) . The men looked at each other, nettled. The flowers had all been talking at once!, they could hear it just as plain. But now the woodmen were being made out to look like

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liars and idiots.

“We can *prove* there’s magic!” blurted Woody suddenly.

The girls glanced toward them disdainfully.

“Oh, yeah?” The other woodmen also looked at him enquiringly.

Hackett fiddled with his ring finger, then reached over and took hold of Monique’s hand. “Woody!” yelled Forrest, suddenly aware of what he was up to.

“It’s about time!” the Munchkin blurted back. “We’re only on this train at this minute as part of a project to prove there’s magic. We can do it right now! Watch!” he commanded his audience. Then he muttered, “Pryzxl!”

There was a sharp gasp from all sides. Monique had disappeared.

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - E I G H T

Ozma was in the bathtub when the American woman arrived. Which of the two ladies was the more amazed at the encounter is a toss-up.

The ring/amulet mechanism was naturally so triggered that the user of the device was delivered into the immediate presence of the original giver of it, in this case Fairy Ozma of Oz.

Monique was utterly bewildered—and when she'd had a moment to think about it, terrified—at her sudden translation. Ozma, being used to magic and its effects in everyday life, was by no means terrified and only for a moment bewildered. Like the Queen of England when a stranger suddenly appeared in *her* bedroom, she played it cool. Ozma wasn't even "furious". She just said "Will you hand me my robe, dear?" Then like Venus she arose from the waves (rather small ones). The thoughtful little fairy princess laid her hand on her visitor's arm. "Don't be alarmed. Everything will be fine. I think I can guess that you arrived here by magic. Is it not so?"

"Er, well, yeah, I guess. Anyway, this dude said he was going-to show us some magic."

"Which dude was that?" asked Ozma, placing a folded bath towel on the edge of the tub and sitting there. She motioned Monique to take a seat at the dressing table.

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"Oh, I don't know his name. He was just a trick we were trying to pick up for the evening—him and his pals."

"And who are 'we'?" said the fairy. When Monique hesitated, Ozma went on; "You spoke of 'we'."

"Oh, yeah. Hnh-hnh, " Monique snickered. "Some other women I was on a train with. We were going to the coast—on business."

"You are professional women, then?"

"Well, yes, you might say so."

"And the men? I think you implied there were several of them. There weren't *ten* of them, were there? by any chance?"

"Yeah! I think that's just how many there were."

"Ah." Ozma showed a comfortable smile. "I believe I know where we are then."

"I sure don't." Finding she was in such a very mild and unthreatening situation, Monique had got over her momentary fright. But she was *very* much disoriented and gazed around her.

"I—er, sort of run this show," explained Ozma and gestured to indicate the emerald-studded walls of the bathroom and by implication the whole emerald-studded palace around her.

The visitor exhaled a soft whistle. "Are you kind of a princess or something?"

"Yes; my name is Ozma. And yours?"

"Oh, the boys call me 'Monique'."

"And the girls?"

"Er—they mostly say 'Ms Mulroony'." Monique bridled slightly. "I was the manageress."

"I have some professional gentlemen staying here," related Ozma. "You might like to meet them. Just let me get into something. I won't be a moment."

The fairy stepped round the corner to her great walk-in closet and in not very long re-emerged. To make Ms Mulroony feel not out of place Ozma put on a purple satin dress she kept for (very) occasional wear and a feather boa.

While her hostess was about it Monique sat at the dressing

table and turned over with acute professional interest Ozma's various aids to beauty. She was curious as to how much Ozma's attractive appearance owed to the preparations that lay at this moment under her hand; lipsticks and high-liners in silver cases, a gold powder box, tweezers, nail scissors, and curling irons in various tones of ozynium. And what was this?; a pill box carved in jade whose label read "To be taken, one a month, for total gorgeousness." Well, no wonder.

Actually, Monique thought her own appearance quite fetching, even without the help of magic remedies. She picked up the princess' V-shaped hand mirror in its platinum frame and surveyed her countenance.

Then she turned to see the Girl Ruler reappear in quite a stunning ensemble. Ozma took her hand and led the way to the Veridian Verandah, where she rang for tea.

"Jellia," she said when her young maid appeared, "will you invite the Historian and Mr. Diggs to join us? We'll wait for them and then have tea and crumpets."

"Mr. Diggs," repeated Jellia Jamb. "You mean—"

"Yes, Mr. Diggs," the Girl Ruler cut her off. Considering the newness of it all to the visitor, Ozma thought she'd like to veil for a bit the fact that there were wizards on the premises. Other professions (by which she might name him) the Wizard had none.

Presently, when introductions had been made and everyone was cosily spreading clotted cream on the toasted muffins—or bismarcks for those who preferred them—Ozma opened the conversation. "Ms Mulroony came here at the invitation of the ten woodmen—"

"Is that what those guys were?" blurted Monique. She was now quite at her ease, having the adaptability of her kind. She cased the two geezers the little queen girl had brought in for the tea party as being pretty obviously too old to cut the mustard but they seemed harmless enough and she felt quite comfortable with them. "I thought they looked a little bit—rustic, shall we say?" she went on adopting her educated manner. She

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chucked good-naturedly.

"They're quite sterling fellows, really," said Ozma, "and brighter than they look.

In fact, we're counting on them for a vital service to be performed for their fatherland. That is, we were..." She turned to look at her two male guests.

The Wizard and the Historian looked back questioningly. They suspected there was more to this gathering than just the social occasion, delightful though that was.

"We've been feeling rather frustrated, haven't we, gentlemen?" went on Ozma rhetorically, "by the fact that, though we can at any time see and even, after a fashion, converse with our traveling friends in the outside world, it is a good deal more awkward trying to convey any tangible objects to them. In the end we fell back on the extremely clumsy device of launching an airship loaded with - er, useful devices."

Ozma turned again to Ms Mulroony and topped up her cup. "Let me be frank with you, my dear. We're talking about magic—"

"Goody!" cried the woman girlishly. Then, "Don't mind me. I mean, I came here on a dare because I was - well, curious about magic. Now I'm more curious! Do you mean magic really works?"

"That is just exactly the question that's been exercising us!" declared Ozma. "*Would* our magic work at all in the great world outside? Sometimes it seems to, sometimes not. Sometimes magic dispatched into that world just doesn't arrive. You remember Miss Dorothy's silver slippers, Wizard?"

Monique stared. Of course it was all nonsense, but this wouldn't be *the* Wizard of Oz?!

"Yes, indeed," said that worthy, as if answering her thoughts. "And then just now this other case; the flowers the woodmen have with them. That too is magic of a sort but we learn that no one—no grown person not from Oz—can sense their life."

"That's right!" crowed Monique. "Some of the yokels—er, I mean the fellas—had us try to hear their buttonhole flowers talk.

We thought it was just a come-on."

"You heard nothing?"

"Not a peep."

"There, you see, Wizard?" said Ozma. For the orientation of their visitor she did some further explaining:

"Mr. Diggs proposed — oh, months ago — that he simply 'step across' to the great world, into our Ambassador Choggolak's presence, and hand her a mixed box of magic tricks. I was against the plan. There is one thing we have learned: any magic device, formerly functioning effectively here in Oz, if it proves *not* to operate in the outer world, also is found to be non-operative any longer when recalled to this country. It would seem that some sort of theurgical 'wasting' occurs in certain types of magical charms in the act of transfer to a non-magical setting. Furthermore, that wasting is definitive both for the outer world and subsequently for the fairyland as well.

"I thought such an errand on his part might be a waste of time and also of magic. Now I've changed my mind," the fairy confessed. "Circumstances have forced us to send off, *quand même*, a shipment of magic goods to America. Now I'd even like to add to it — and, indeed, speed up the process."

Everybody looked interested, if not, in all cases, comprehending. Ozma needed no urging to proceed.

"You'll be wanting to rejoin your friends, I think?" Ozma looked at Ms M. kindly. She had already assessed that Oz was perhaps scarcely a likely place for Monique to take up residence.

"Oh, yes!" agreed the floozy. Then she realized how she really felt. It was too late. "Er, well, yes the other ladies will be expecting me." But oh, what a pang! The not ill-natured creature, vulgar as she might be, knew with sharp suddenness that the way of life she had chosen for its adventure, variety, and (albeit paid-for) moments of rapture was tasteless ashes in comparison with what she might have enjoyed in a land of romance, beauty, and - real! - magic.

"So when we send you back," Ozma went on smoothly, "we will be so grateful if you'll carry along, in a small zip bag chained

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to your wrist so there's no chance of its being lost, a supply of charms to be delivered to the Ten Woodmen of Oz."

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

The day dawned dark, as usual, and on floated the great quiet dragon, belying its name by being fire-free and unflapping. Jinjur got breakfast for the aeronauts, who had slept rolled in blankets on the padded floor. Oyhho II was definitely not designed to be anybody's home away from home. All available space had to be maximally 'crammable-full', so no fixed seats, bunks, or other fitments than the control consoles were to be found.

Expedition Leader Henkomankatogale looked out the windows and was surprised to see that what was visible of the sun was directly on the vessel's starboard side. He stepped with some smartness to Koboble at the steering deck.

"Can this be right, chief?" he said peering forward into the unrelieved gloom.

"Sure is," reassured the Winkie pilot. "Sempernunquam turned out to be closer to Alaska than anywhere else. I've set the pilot for Anchorage, then we'll follow straight down the coast –if you agree. Meanwhile there's land for landing on in any emergency."

Henk shrugged. "Good enough... Think there's any reason to go down? Send messages or anything?"

"Don't see why. Everything's going according to schedule.

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We'll reach Seattle by tomorrow noon."

But there Koboble spoke too soon.

A tiny noise in the distance, the first from outside the aircraft that the voyagers had heard since lifting, developed within seconds to an ear-splitting roar. At the same moment infrajet planes sped past the windows at what seemed the speed of light. So abrupt was their passing that the eye had only a 'subliminal' impression of having seen them. But they returned.

Now their speed cut in an instant, so that the planes remained hanging in the hazy air like giant humming birds.

"It's those six-point jets!" cried Henk excitedly. "They've come to escort us! Well, whatta you know! I've read about them, but never seen 'em, of course. They're fitted with six powerful jets—"

"Yes, boss," interrupted Koboble calmly. "But 'escort us' where? See those red markings?"

Jinjur screamed. Or no, it must have been one of the others. The young woman was after all too self-possessed for that. But it was she who affirmed in a tone of utmost excitement; "Russians! We've been captured!"

This was confirmed all too soon. Two of the strange aircraft encroached on the right. Koboble was forced to alter course or risk midair collision. When he had set the navigator at north-by-northwest the instant retreat of the planes made clear that he had got the message.

The hijacked ones could have resumed their breakfast then but somehow no one cared to. The sky pirates seemed in no hurry. They just gently nudged Oyhho II ever more westerly while holding the convoy along an exclusively cross-water route. At about eleven o'clock in the morning, after hours of fevered speculation by the fearful air travelers, they received signals to mount.

Slowly the great air-bag rose, obeying Koboble's skilful piloting. Up ...up...up the rise continued, until the first symptoms of oxygen starvation among the aeronatus came on. Ojo distributed the pressure masks but in fact they proved scarcely

necessary for just then signals came to halt ascent. At the same time the vessel was to turn in on a much more directly northerly tack.

It would be dispiriting to retail the course of the alarmed, excited and ultimately quarrelsome and dejected talk that filled the expeditionists' day. They were all bright and dedicated people. There were no hotheads among them. They all knew that all they could do was what they could not help but do: obey the commands of the aggressors who had come on them out of a—well, not clear, but 'unsuspecting'?—sky.

Of course there were those who argued for resistance. Koboble was one, Ojo another—and Jinjur. She remembered her days as an amazon leading a great army. Perhaps here once more was a chance for military glory.

But what?: *How* could they do anything to resist? Ignore the 'herding' the infrajets were exercising upon them? That could only lead to collision, catastrophe, and a collapse in tatters into the sea. Not in flames, of course, for ozogen was unflammable, but that would be small consolation as they struggled in the waves under the wreckage of the great tinfoil bag.

The only positive result of the day's exchanges was that the genesis of their plight was gradually pieced together. The products of logic and some hints of world news that one and another had heard were fitted into a pattern that for the nonce satisfied the poor hostages' mystification. The exchange took place early on in that fatal morning.

"Russians!?" exclaimed Prof. Wogglebug. "But Russia is not at war! except with Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and China. I mean they're not at war in the Pacific Ocean region. How could they carry out such an act of aggression here?"

"Easy," said Ojo. "Remember what they did to the Korean airliner in 1983:. They were not 'at war in the Pacific' then either."

"*And* they didn't get involved in one as a result," reminded Henk with a hollow laugh. "Maybe they won't now either."

"But why?" puzzled little Lestar. "It isn't like the Russians to

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commit acts of *unprovoked* aggression.”

The others stared at him somewhat but then remembered where that other Oz of his came from. Of course for Lestar and his three comrades aboard the flight there had been nothing to choose between Afghanistan and Nicaragua.

“What I don’t understand,” declared Jinjur forthrightly, “is how Ozma and the Wizard and Glinda could let us get involved in anything like this! Glinda gets a summary of world news every day of her life. If the world’s at war she should have let us know.”

“Right, my dear,” seconded the Wogglebug. “Ergo, the world is not at war. Oh, lots of small wars -” and the professor ticked off twenty-two penny-ante armed conflicts currently in progress, some of them with antecedents going back twenty or thirty years. One characteristic of late-twentieth-century wars was that, once started, they never stopped. Both (or more) sides were kept supplied by their allies, so the conflicts ticked over functionally from year to year without, however, ever escalating to measures drastic enough to *settle* any war decisively. “But there’s not any official ‘world war’ going on,” finished the doctor emeritus. “Not that I’ve heard of, anyway.”

“Let’s not be naive,” put in Henk. “All of us were alerted months ago to the possibility of just this kind of situation. Don’t you remember how the ten woodmen’s tour was broken up by a diplomatic incident? the Russians claiming reversion of Alaska because some old treaty was declared invalid?”

“Pooh,” snorted the Wogglebug. “That sort of thing goes on daily in the outer world. No one took any notice. The Soviets didn’t actually try to land in Alaska and take it over, did they? Certainly Glinda couldn’t have begun to brief us on every little political squabble going on anywhere in the world.”

“Just the same,” pursued Henk, “the Russians never withdrew the claim. Now we’re feeling the brunt of it.”

With that they subsided into a mood of depression that lasted them all day. Sometimes they tried to imagine that the darting hummingbird-like movement of the accompanying infrajets

planes was changing character and then somebody would say: "Look, the planes on the left have disappeared! Have the Americans finally sent somebody to the rescue? and the Russkis have gone to fight them off?"

The failure of friendly aircraft to come to their support surprised the voyagers almost as much as the aggression of the unfriendly craft. True, the idea of such air support, *before* anything happened, had not crossed their minds. Convoy aircraft had not hovered round the Hindenburg in 1938, and that was only a year before the world was engulfed in war. It was certain, however, that the great drifting dragon was visible on the world's air reconnaissance screens, so at least *now* why were squadrons not racing to their relief?

"Hah!" scoffed the Doctor Emeritus. He, of all those present, had actually visited America in a public capacity (Kaggi-Karr went there 'privately') on more than one occasion and fancied himself rather an "old. America hand". "Have you known the United States to *do* anything in a crisis? Let's remember Pearl Harbor. They had everything to forebode from Japan in those days and yet were caught with their trousers at their ankles. Since then they've grown even less prone to dispatch military aid without a *lot* of deliberation."

Nobody found anything to rebutt. They flew on into the night and the darkness.

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

Meanwhile, back at the ranch...

Since the eighties it had been traditional for the President to have a ranch, even if like Pres. Koxden, he was from the sidewalks of New Jersey. Furthermore it was de rigueur for the president to spend every weekend *on* the ranch. That was how it happened that Jycayd Koxden and Mrs Alahuza Koxden and Miss Najeeb Koxden, with their special guest, Dr. Dorothy Choggolak, were way beyond the hills in Idaho when word came of the shocking incursion by Soviet aircraft.

The President looked as grave as only a president can. "Darn," he said. At the ranch it was the done thing to talk country-and-western. Besides, in this era 'country' was no longer 'corny'—not when doctorates were given for dissertations on "The Contribution of Tennessee Ernie to the Development of the Fifteen Flat Scale" or "Truck-driver Argot as a Basis for Semasiological Standards".

The President continued; "I was starting to believe in it all, Doctor. And now this!"

They all stared intently at the closed-circuit T.V. Of course it was only the newsreader's face that was seen. No glimpse was afforded of what might have been seen on radar screens transmitting impulses from the actual theatre of events. Television

had early given up the practice of sending pictures of newsworthy happenings. You just saw people talking *about* the happenings. Nevertheless it was important to stare fixedly at the announcer's face. If you tried to maintain that you got just as much by merely listening to him, you were not considered a serious person.

Dorothy was inclined to be hysterical. After all, she had a son aboard the doomed airship. The Koxdens just looked deeply concerned. It didn't stop them from passing around the canapé plates and dip bowls or popping out to the fridge for a coke.

"I'm deeply disturbed," said the President afterwards. This was after they'd watched for hours the reports that there were no new developments and everybody was getting sleepy. "This might just be the straw that breaks the camel's back." Such a simile came naturally to one of his ethnic background.

"Oh, Dad! Do you mean it?" cried Najeeb. "I mean East and West have been in conflict continually now for fifty years and more. There's never been a time in this century without war. But after all neither has America ever in history been at war with Russia. Do you think it *could* come now?"

"Sweetheart, the potential is always there. It's like with earthquakes. The friction grinds and grinds, the tensions build and build, and then one day there has to be a break and resolve the strain. Yes, I think it could come now:"

With awe they all stared anew at the T.V. screen. Dorothy left at the crack of dawn for her flight on to Seattle.

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

“There! “

Monique slipped the bracelet handle off her arm and handed the scant-foot-square canvas-covered case to Forrest Sawyer.

“Ozma said I could have the box,” she lied, “after you’ve got all your goodies out of it.” Or if she wasn’t strictly lying, it was only because she’d practised a little blackmail earlier. But great stakes were on the board here. Ms Mulroony had conceived a vast ambition and all other considerations went by that board.

For the nonce she played a very close hand. It would never do to let anyone know what she had in mind, either her girls or these rubes, who believe it or not, really were from a place called Oz. She was just terribly ingratiating in every direction.

“Now do you believe?” said Woody Hackett with sparkling eyes. He’d had more than one mauvaise quart d’heure in the three hours the floozy had been gone. Still, he had already proved his point, and if the woman was never seen again, well, he reckoned it was in a good cause.

Right at the start the success of his undertaking was evident. If the ten woodmen’s mission in the world was to make people believe in the efficacy of magic, they could have had no more total triumph than the present. Of course there was a little screaming at first and calling of the conductor by the frightened

women. "They've kidnapped our friend!" they yelled, and demanded that he do something about it.

"Now, now, ladies, keep calm," soothed the comfortable-uncle-type functionary. If he wasn't the brightest that merely helped in the present case. "You say one of your group has left you?"

"Yes! She just vanished - in a puff of smoke!"

"You know, there wasn't any smoke, honey," chided Cindy Lou. "The boys don't smoke so we didn't."

"Anyway, she disappeared! And these guys are responsible."

"Maybe she went to the ladies' room."

"She vanished! I tell you. A person can't vanish, even to the loo."

"I'll just check." So the conductor just checked, and found there was no one in the nearest two toilet rooms.

"She could be concealed under a seat." Harriet and Janine folded their arms and tapped one shoe-tip while the conductor, whose name was Edgar Gibbons, looked under the seats.

"Maybe she got off the train," suggested Mr Gibbons.

At that Cindy Lou screamed again sharply. "Why do you scream?"

"If she got off the train, she's dead!"

The train hasn't stopped the last twenty minutes."

The conductor snapped his fingers, then consulted his pocket watch "That's right!" Then he looked sharply at the ten woodmen.

"Did you kidnap the missing passenger?" he demanded.

"Count," said Spokesman Sawyer, perhaps a bit smugly. "When you kidnap somebody you have to go with them. There are still ten of our party here."

"Yes, that's so... Er, lemme see your tickets."

So Forrest produced the ten ticket strips. All that proved was that they had tickets. Now Gibbons eyed them all closely and individually.

When he got to Boscaiolo and Tagliabosco, the darkest of the group of men, he said, "You're the fifth?"

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The two looked back at him a bit uncertainly but Sawyer spoke for them. "That's right, chief," he lied coolly, and the conductor was content.

It should perhaps be explained here that in 1993 Congress passed an Act requiring that every group of persons being together in a public place and comprising more than three individuals must consist of one quarter or one fifth black, whichever was the more practicable. This contingent was familiarly known as "the fifth". (Cindy Lou was the fifth - in her group of four!)

Fortunately, "black blood" being so much stronger than "white", anyone with even a dark tan was automatically accepted as being negro for the purposes of the law. Albero and Legno, who were from the south of Oz, were just dark enough of tint to pass muster.

The conductor went off, muttering to himself, and that seemed to be the end of that passage. The three floozies perforce subsided from their agitation, and all the more so when Albero said, "Don't worry, ladies. Your friend turned up in front of Princess Ozma, the kindest fairy in the world. Nothing can happen to her."

"Fairy'?" said Harriet. "You guys aren't fairies yourselves?"

"Oh, no."

"That's right, you did say you were married."

"Most of us, that is to say," supplied Forrest. "Three of the fellas aren't."

"At their age? So maybe they're fairies?" There seemed to be a conflict of connotation here but when Harriet, Janine, and Cindy Lou got established that Coupeur du Bois, Waldo Baumschneider, and Albero Boscaiolo were unmarried men but that there was no reason why they should *not* be married, they went and sat beside them. Then the woodmen were subjected to an intensive onslaught of charm.

It is a truth universally recognized that where men are impervious to the allure of magic women in general are prone to believe in it. The proof of the proposition is to be seen in the fact

that every woman in the world who can afford it has a vanity table but not a single man does.

Faced with the result of Mr Gibbons' thoroughgoing researches the women had to believe in magic. That larrikinish-looking soi-disant woodman had done *something* and Ms Mulroony had disappeared. The explanation easiest to believe in was magic. So, if magic was real, and these men possessed the secret of it, would you not give your soul, not to mention the body, to be allowed to share in it? That was why it was now the turn of Albero and the others to have some bad quarter-hours during the next two. Fending off the affectionate ladies was not easy. Actually, Albero was not even sure he wanted to fend, but the other fellows were looking.

Monique's return, just before the train went into a Montana tunnel, merely shifted everything into a higher gear. At the apparition there was a bit more screaming by her friends—of amazement and satisfaction. Then the new arrival seated herself beside the spokesman of the woodmen.

"Well, aren't you going to open it?" Monique tapped the cover of the inner emerald box like she'd learned to do from T.V. commercials.

"Oh—er, well, I thought I'd wait till the fellows and I are alone."

"Not on your nelly," declared Ms Mulroony equably. That box was carved from a single giant emerald. She was going to have it or die in the attempt. "Princess Ozma said it was the *least* I should have—for bringing the contents back to you. Don't forget; I could just have gone off with it, and kept the box *and* all the magic for myself."

No, you couldn't thought Sawyer. He knew that much at least about how a spell of Ozma's worked. He said nothing, however, and grudgingly felt about for the catch to the lid of the box.

Just then the Silver Bullet hurtled into the tunnel. When it emerged, why, there was the box open before them and all its treasures displayed. Almost all. In that one moment of darkness razor-sharp Monique had reached across and deftly palmed

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one object of the contents, the first that her hand encountered.

Forrest picked up a little blue bottle and read the label: "Take one at bedtime for complete invisibility." Then a little brass box on which was inscribed: "Hum into me your favorite tune." That was too much of temptation for musical Forrest. He immediately lifted the tiny casket toward his mouth and began to hum the melody of "Stella by Starlight".

When he had finished, they all could hear an infinitesimal sound from within the box as of harp strings being plucked a mile a way. Then suddenly a great symphonic theme, played by a 91-piece orchestra, burst on their ears, loud enough to fill a concert hall comfortably. Everybody clapped their hands to their ears in dismay but there was nothing they could do about it until the twelve-minute recital had played itself out.

"Don't try any more of the items" suggested Arbol C., "okay, Forrest? Just pass em out." Then all the woodmen made room in their pockets to receive one or two of the trinkets.

Soon the emerald casket was empty and had been reluctantly handed over to Monique Mulroony, who clasped it to her bosom like a can of Gibbs' Pork and Beans, as if to say 'Nobody is going to get this emerald box away from me—ever.

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

It was still night and they were still flying. There was only place at the controls for one navigator and that was Koboble. Everybody else had subsided into troubled sleep. Even the crow Kaggi-Karr had given up kibbitzing and perched on the intercom microphone, her head under a wing.

As stated, there were no hotheads on the flight, and, as stated, if there were any, Koboble was one. Not "hothead" exactly but, in a disagreeable situation, given rather to resistance than to collapsing inertly into acceptance. All night alone at the controls he'd had time to think - and to resent.

That was how it happened that shortly before what ought to have been dawn but wasn't, when Koboble saw the flashes of pink light which were the way the infrajets signaled in the dark hours that they were closing in, he altered the wheel to port - then stopped. He stood for a long moment in deep thought, while the fate of large parts of the world hung in the balance. Then he slowly swung the wheel back to the right.

There was a squawk and a screech of reversed jets from the two aircraft to starboard and then the pink lights began to dance in a very fury. Koboble took no notice. While he stubbornly directed the dragon on toward the north he kept saying to himself; "What's the sense of letting ourselves be captured? To

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save our hides? Because everything else will be lost. But our lives aren't in danger! We're from Oz and one thing at least the authorities have seen to; we're protected by every power of magic. On the other hand, if we resist we might *just* get out of this with a little something *besides* our lives."

The planes were indicating by a feverish dipping and return then dipping again, that Oyhho II was to descend. The convoy had already come a long way down from the rim of oxygen depletion. A consultation at the maps with Commander Henk had persuaded Koboble that that high flight, a temporary measure, had been for the purpose of staying out of range of possible anti-aircraft batteries when they crossed the Aleutians. Now they were near where the noses of Alaska and Siberia sniffed at each other like combat-ready dogs. Land in Siberia? Koboble wasn't thinking of it.

The altered tenor of the noise of the attendant jets had begun to wake the passengers. Before they could come to sufficiently to start to argue with him Koboble gave the wheel a sharp tug a further two notches to the right.

He shouldn't have done that. It was an unconsidered move by the otherwise thoughtful and controlled Winkie technician.

There was a cry of tin with a vengeance as the back-thrust of the jets of the nearest plane to starboard disintegrated a yard-broad area of the dragon airship's skin. The highly volatile ozogen began to escape with a vast whoosh that reverberated like the voice of doom in the suspended cabin and brought every sleeper to his feet with violence.

Henkomankatogale shoved Koboble from his seat with scant ceremony and took over the controls. "Brief me!" he yelled, and the conscience-stricken Winkie began to lie and confess all at the same time;

"I don't know what happened! but the bag's obviously ruptured. We're between the Diomedes. I meant to bring her down in American territory. Maybe you still can. Hold to starboard! the more the better."

They were coming down... fast. But much *too* fast.

“Get into your crash straps!” screamed Henk and the terrified passengers rushed to obey. Round the arc of the cabin wall, welded to a broad ozyinium band were a series of tall pale yellow cocoon-like objects resembling mummy cases standing on end. Into one of these dashed each of the eight unoccupied travelers and pulled the two padded sides close around him, locking the belts. The principle was rather like that of going over Niagara in a rubber ball... Unprovided with “cocoons”, Kaggi-Karr and the round robin just concentrated on staying airborne.

Down, down they dropped. There was no thought of staying air-supported any more but what the commander and the navigator *could* do was to give maximum thrust to the engines that drove the craft forward. They might just be able to ‘outrun’ the collapsing tin bag by a few yards when they finally struck earth. That might afford the possibility of escape from the collapsed passenger cabin as an alternative to staying to be entrapped and smothered by the deflated dragon-hide lying spread out over and about them on every side. Furthermore, every mile further to the east they might hurl themselves was one mile more that might enforce assistance to them from the Americans.

At last! an area of the planet’s dark surface loomed into sight, filling the entire window view as the aircraft plunged in its sharp fall. Was it...?! could one believe one’s luck? and was it *land* below?! not the frigid sea one had every reason to expect.

Henk and Koboble waited till the last second when they were no longer exercising any direction over the falling vessel’s movement but were only horrified spectators; then they dived for two open “cocoons” close by.

The impact knocked everyone unconscious, including the two birds.

C H A P T E R T H I R T Y - T H R E E

Dorothy and Najeeb crowded into the limousine-length taxi with Mrs Tubbs and the crowd of retainers and sped to the Mount Vernon West Hotel. In the lobby they were met by the worried woodmen and, curiously, four ladies who appeared to have joined their party.

“Have you heard?” were the princess’ first words even as she seized outstretched hands in ardent salutation. If her entourage had not been along she might well have embraced one or two of the Ozites in her relief and satisfaction at seeing old-familiar faces again.

“Yes,” confirmed Spokesman Forrest. “We’ve been glued to the television set since we got in. Isn’t it horrible! Our mission that was supposed to be one of pure peace has led to this...”

The rest of what he might have had to say was drowned out as everybody in both parties talked at once. They made two lift-loads going up to the suites that had been engaged for them. In the elevator Dorothy found herself standing next to a youngish woman in silver-fox furs who astonished her by saying “Princess Ozma has told me so much about you! I’ve been dying to meet you.” It was an hour or two later before the Kansas girl got quite clear how the Philadelphia woman was able to make any such statements.

In the main apartment they crowded to the T.V. room and settled down to watch. They might have been any American family (rather a large one) engaged in that most typical of all American activities - or, perhaps, substitute for activities. In the present crisis uninterrupted news bulletins drove even *M.A.S.H. IV* from the screen.

The latest was that Soviet amphibious troops had landed on the barren north shore of Little Diomedede and were engaged in hand to hand fighting with totally unprepared American National Guardsmen. Unsurprisingly the Russians had rolled forward to occupy the north third of the little islet. Now the ABS man on the spot in Nome relayed the news that the third had increased to a half and it was feared that by nightfall the entire fragment of American territory would be in enemy hands.

"How queer to hear them talking of the Russians as outright 'the enemy'!" exclaimed Ms Najeeb, awed. Then, "Oh, look, there's Daddy!"

The scene had switched to the Rotunda of the Capitol in Washington, where Pres. Koxden stood at a microphone, ringed at a distance by statesmen looking grave. "My fellow Americans," he said in measured tones and looked both sad and dedicated as he went on; "It is my tragic duty to inform you that a state of war exists between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a situation long feared, never believed ultimately possible, but now for better or for worse upon us. In an apparent bid to support a claim of sovereignty over Alaska made six months ago, the Soviets came ashore at Whale Head Point on the island of Little Diomedede off the western Alaska coast at oh-four hours mid Pacific time this afternoon. The nominal force of 230 U.S. Marines stationed on the island since January, as well as National Guardsmen, were immediately engaged and shortly overpowered.."

The details rolled on and the group in the Seattle hotel room listened breathlessly to hear named the ultimate occasion for the assault. It never came. "But how queer!" exclaimed Dr. Choggolak. "He never said *why* the Russians came in!"

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That was left to News Behind the News to reveal at their, as usual, sensational midnight broadcast. "Why!" screamed the wild-blond-haired announceress. "Why did the Russkis choose just today to make their grab at sovereign U.S. territory? That's what you've all been asking yourselves. Here's the story, folks! AND! it's over to Peter Twiddle in Moscoh!"

Twiddle's epicene face, swathed in furs (although it was May), was seen against the background of the Kremlin, and the lahdidah English voice announced that "the rumor here is that a renegade aircraft, apparently something like an old-fashioned dirigible, was shot down today over the northern Pacific by Soviet Air Space Patrol jets. The vessel crash-landed in American territory. It is not known who, or what, was aboard but apparently it was something so vital that occupation of the scene of the crash was essential to Soviet policy. It has further been learned..." Twiddle droned on about intra-party squabbles in the Presidium that seemed to have nothing to do with the matter that so engrossed the minds of the people in the Mount Vernon West suite.

Dorothy and the woodmen were devastated. (The others, aside from Ms Koxden, had little or no idea of what was at stake.) There was, however, nothing they could do. Worn out by the events and emotions of the day they all went to bed and slept long into the morning.

The next day was full of action but nothing that pleased anybody very much. Najeeb Koxden returned to Washington to confer with her father and bring earnest messages from the Oz delegation. Late that evening the President phoned Dorothy. "Magic, my dear? I'm afraid it's too late for that. We will have to put your operation on Hold until this other affair has been settled. I think it's going to be a long haul. Neither side can voluntarily give an inch. Public relations wouldn't stand for it—"

Dorothy had to interrupt the President's blandities. "But what about my friends aboard the dragon airship?! I have to know about them!"

"We can't say anything to the media, of course," soothed the

President. "The announcement that a magic-powered aircraft was on its way to America from a continent no one had ever heard of would not go down well with the public. It would be the death blow to the Administration's credibility. Personally I am deeply regretful. It would have been swell to see the folks from Oz—" For just a moment of intimacy Mr Koxden spoke ranch-style. Then he recovered. "Every measure must be taken to avoid the suggestion of frivolousness." Then again he relented; "But I can let you know this much, Princess; a twelve-man commando unit has been assigned to get through to the survivors from the airship—if any."

That raised a spark of hope in Dorothy's breast, though she thought Mr Koxden might well have left off those last two words.

Meanwhile other disagreeable things happened. Mrs Tubbs, the secretary, the chauffeur, the cook, and Dorothy's personal maid, disappointed at the departure of the President's daughter and noticing that the T.V. camera crew and the last of the reporters had disappeared, gave notice, to go into effect immediately.

Seeing the staff depart, Monique and her floozies picked quarrels with the woodmen and flounced off. The ostensible motive was the continued and un-called-for presence of "that stuck-up piece calling herself 'princess'." I think at least this development caused the ten woodmen more relief than distress, though Albero Boscaiolo was seen to look blue. Spokesman Sawyer raised no objections when, as a last act, Ms Mulroony required him to sign, and swear to before a notary she called in, the typed statement she had taken care to get the secretary to run off before her decampment. The statement amounted to a bill of sale and affirmed that Forrest Sawyer, for some astronomical sum, had disposed of one jeweled casket to the party of the second part, Mrs Monique Mulroony.

The women hurried to the Amtrak station and made use of the final portion of their tickets to Portland.

By then Dorothy and the woodmen were feeling washed up on the proverbial shelf of rock. "What about it, Princess?"

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queried Sawyer at last (by now they'd been at the Mount Vernon for three days). "Shall we go back to Oz?"

"Oh, Forrest, how could you?" Dorothy raised a tear-stained face. "Go away and leave my boy to a cruel fate in a Russian gulag? I *have* to wait here till the last hope is out."

"Okay. We wait with you." Forrest sighed and opened a fresh jigsaw puzzle box. Anyway the government was picking up the tab for the Mount Vernon West plus carfare, so the group had no financial qualms.

Actually the desponding ambassadors had not all that long to wait, for once upon a midnight dreary as they pondered, weak and weary, over many a quaint and curious puzzle piece that wouldn't fit—as they nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a rapping tapping at their chamber door.

"Goodness," said Princess Dorothy. "Who could that be?"

Woody Hackett was first off the mark.

He'd just been kibbitzing anyway, was standing, and was nearest the ornate rococo main door of the apartment. He stepped across and twisted the wrought simugold doorknob.

Two birds fluttered into the room. They were Kaggi-Karr the Crow and the Round Robin.

C H A P T E R T H I R T Y - F O U R

Those two birds were experienced, or educated, or both, enough to know that an object suspended in a medium, whether water or gas or air, within a falling container will suffer marginally less from impact shock than the vessel itself. That's why they flapped about madly inside the plunging dragon's cabin rather than clinging to any perch.

Even so, momentum and inertia caught up with them, they were flung against a couple of the padded "crash straps", and were stunned when the vast collapsed bag flowed out over the stony tundra. But yet again; they were the least stunned of Oyhho II's twelve passengers. It fell to them to pick themselves up, dust themselves off, and start all over again, constating that the good-luck charms they wore round their necks had indeed done their business. Then they fluttered to the unconscious people in the cocoons and with squawks and peckings tried to wrest from them signs of life.

Ojo the Lucky was the first to respond. "Ouunhh, " he groaned and informed them that he ached in a hundred places.

"That's okay. At least you're in shape to tell us you ache," barked the crow. "What about the others? "

One virtue of the nature of the great dirigible was that there was no other feasible position for the crashed passenger cabin

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to land in than horizontal to the ground. No one in a cocoon was hanging upside-down or suspended from a “ceiling”. The shattering effect of the near-pancake landing plus the considerable weight of the mighty tinfoil bag had crushed the roof of the cabin down to about four feet from the floor. It was the grim duty of the three restored survivors to check that none of the others had got broken necks.

No, the battery of protective devices Fairy Ozma and Sorceress Glinda had caused to be sent along with the expeditionaries demonstrated their efficacy. Everybody was just having a restorative swoon after the trials of recent hours and responded eventually to fervent suits that they look lively and get themselves out of the entangling wreckage and away. The Russkis would be there any minute

The two navigators’ efforts to ‘nose-dive’ the craft may perhaps have succeeded partially. When on hands and knees the men reached the shattered observation windows and crawled out into the silvery-black wilderness of heaped mountains of leaf tin, they were astonished to see pinpoints of light coming through here and there; nor did there seem to be any serious lack of air. The castaways applied their machetes at those light-allowing places in the fabric and hacked stoutly. The light sources increased in luster. Even as murky a day as they knew awaited them outside was sufficient to send vagrant grey beams into their tinfoil prison.

A final upward-stretched hack of his machete and Henk saw daylight outside. The crowd dropped everything and began to clamber upwards through the ever collapsing roil of tin. The cries were ear-creasing, the people in their alarm and eagerness crying as loud as the tin.

After Mr Baum’s revelation in the first book of the original testament that Oz people, especially Munchkins, were no bigger than a six-to-eight-year-old Kansas girl, the concept seemed to get forgotten. Indeed, already in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* itself both the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow are pictured as taller than Dorothy. Even sitting down Nick Chopper is as tall

as she is! Ever afterward Ozites were allowed to be as big as average outer-world people .

Not so with the denizens of Volkovian Oz. They all remained diminutive, with the result that Lestar and his alternate-Oz compatriots aboard the flight of the dragon were all a good head or so shorter than their Winkie fellow passengers. That's how it happened that they had to be helped with boosts and pulls by the latter to climb up out of the wreckage.

At last the castaways stood upon the wildly screeching surface of the collapsed mountain of thin tin. The noise was not music to their ears and they made haste to leap away and down off the mass. Still no blessed respite from noise supervened, for now, far away, they could hear a hollow booming like bazookas going off. Then there was the sharp rattle of machine-gun fire. The refugees looked at each other with wide-staring eyes.

By common consent, to a man, and with very little talk they set off loping over the black-purple-brown tundra toward some small white clapboard buildings in the east.

"Where have the planes gone?" wondered Jinjur aloud. "I can't believe how easy this is turning out to be."

It's never a good idea to praise your luck 'til you're safe home. Ms Jinjur learned this again now. For now for the first time they not only heard but saw the signs of warfare. Out of the southwest a Jeep (or Russian equivalent) came jouncing and wallowing across the near-permafrost as fast as it could go.

The riders in the vehicle had no need to menace with their rifles. The luckless castaways from the dragon all had their hands in the air by the time the car drew up close to them. Voices barked commands in Russian that were understood by nobody but the crow Kaggi-Karr and Lestar and his artisans.

With the guns in their backs the Ozites were made to stumble away back in the direction of the fallen dirigible. The Jeep followed close, at a snail's pace. None of the captors were ornithologists nor stopped to think how odd it was that a robin and a crow should be objects found in nature on the north shore of Little Diomedé island. No one paid any attention when, after

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some hurried twittering between themselves, the birds flew away in the opposite direction.

C H A P T E R T H I R T Y - F I V E

“Oh, no! not parallel to the wall. We want that counter canted out - like so...!” Ms Mulroony herself gave the stand a series of sharp shoves and it grudgingly moved around to a position in which one end ran toward the wall at a 45-degree angle. “And that one with the opposite corner nearer the wall, like on T.V. panels, you know.”

She stepped back to survey the effect, then her attention was caught by the behavior of a paper hanger. “No, no!” she shrieked. “My dear *man!*... Yank it down quick, before the glue starts to dry. The stripes are to be vertical, not horizontal! What in the world would that look like? The ceiling’s low enough as it is. The place isn’t supposed to look like a dungeon! “

Monique was overseeing the outfitting of her new travel boutique, “Touch and Go”, in a very favorable corner location in the heart of downtown Portland. The other girls looked on. They were to be counter attendants in the new enterprise. To a woman they agreed this was going to be a much more fun way of life.

All but Cindy Lou, of course. She had moved on to greener (actually, blue) pastures. It came about in this way: As soon as they reached Portland Ms Mulroony had gone into deep conference with herself. She sent her three companions out on

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the streets the while. Monique felt she was on Easy Street from here on out, thanks to the emerald box which she could flog for a cool million. But more engrossing to her mind was the matched set of ring and—‘pendant’, she supposed you’d call it—which she had succeeded in abstracting from the magic casket that moment in the tunnel.

It was only when she got by herself in the Portland hotel room that she had time to investigate thoroughly the stolen charm. It was a little rectangle of some unidentifiable substance (like black ivory, she thought) in a pouch of rough velvet. Intaglioed in the “ivory” square were spaces that just fitted a silver ring and a flat metal object like a Phi Beta Kappa (though Monique wasn’t to know that) key. Imprinted on the back of the square in pink letters was an instruction; “Wear the ring, wish the traveler to Oz, rub the key, and repeat ‘Pryzxql’.”

Ms Mulroony let herself play with that concept a long time. She soon realized that what she had there was the very same sort of device that rube had used to transport herself into the presence of that fairy queen. Here was the answer to her prayers! She would be off to Oz at once and never leave it again.

Before she could carry her decision into effect she had second thoughts. There was an aura of *déjà vu* about the plan. So she wished herself into Ozma’s presence for a second time. So what? Would the fairy not promptly whisk her back to America once more? and with a flea in her ear—as well, no doubt, as having relieved her of the magic trick. Besides, it was a waste of the magic: once in Oz she could have no more use of a device for wishing oneself to Oz.

What could she do with the charm that might be to her more long-lasting advantage? she pondered. Then she had the bright idea of opening a travel bureau! With absolutely no outlay of cash or exertion by herself, she could provide customers with the vacation of a lifetime! “Two weeks in Oz”! Was there any American living who wouldn’t grab at that chance if he could? Within moments she had her plans almost fully hatched.

So the Ozma person would be a bit miffed if wish-loads of

trippers started turning up in the Emerald City. Well, Monique thought she could count on the fairy princess' being amiable enough not just to return every arrival with a jolt to where he came from but would surely lay on a little guided tour or two first. It was no sweat for Ozma, using her magic, to wish everyone home again when the time came. All at no cost to Ms Mulroony.

First though she'd need a guinea pig. She must try out the amulet and see if it really worked. Luckily she had caught, at the time of her own translation, Forrest Sawyer's pronunciation of the magic word. She called in Cindy Lou, who experience led her to believe was the most suggestible of her troupe of girls.

"Cindy," she said, "how'd you like to go to Oz?"

"You mean that fairyland where you disappeared to, Ms Mulroony?"

"That's the one."

"What's the story? You want me to transfer my act there completely—or just have a look-see?"

"Why, as to that, I'll leave the choice to you. If there is a choice. You see, you'll turn up in front of a young girl called Ozma: she's kind of a queen of the fairyland. According to how well you play your cards, why, I guess you could stay on there indefinitely. I'll let you in on a secret: I was *very* tempted to stay there myself the time I went. But I had to get back to you girls, of course. You decide. Naturally it'll be great to have you back if you want to come. Howsomever, I need to have somebody to try this thing out on. You see, I got this magic charm..."

Here the two women had a most fascinating quarter hour's confab. The upshot was that Cindy Lou touched the talisman and went to Oz. That is: she certainly disappeared from the hotel room without a trace and in an instant. Monique was satisfied as to the charm's efficacy. She tried to imagine the dark-skinned beauty in the presence of the little queen of Oz.

She didn't succeed. But when next day Cindy Lou hadn't returned Monique figured the dark girl *had* succeeded; that is, she had gone to Oz and she was staying there. The magic

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worked! Touch the talisman and go to Oz! That would be her slogan. At once she set about marketing the emerald box. She used the proceeds to make that corner in downtown Portland the trendiest place of business in town. The response to her full-page ads in *The Oregonian* and other papers couldn't have been more gratifying. She was in business.

C H A P T E R T H I R T Y - S I X

“It wasn’t easy!” declared the crow as the taxis sped toward the airport. She was replying to a question by the interested woodmen as to what sort of journey she had had across Alaska and down the coast in the four days since the outbreak of hostilities at Little Diomedede. Then she gave a graphic description of the rain, hail storms, earthquakes, and dark of night that she and her faithful companion the Round Robin had had to face. But she had also to report the vast warm spring nor’ wester that had caught up the two adventurers and whooshed them the length of the British Columbia coast in a day.

Poor Dorothy Choggolak, in the car with the two birds and four of the woodmen, was feeling sadly out of it. She’d been feeling that way ever since the moment when K.K. and R.R. flapped into the room at the Mount Vernon West more alive than dead, and squatted exhausted on top of the T.V. set. With squawks and chirps the two birds had told the woodmen the main heads of their story; the capture of the crashed aeronauts, the birds’ decision to keep, albeit belatedly, the planned rendezvous in Seattle ... even their cleverness in escaping the notice of the night clerk while trying to find out downstairs at the check-in counter the number of the Ozites’ suite. “That was the hardest part of all,” related the robin, “and we might have failed

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here, right downstairs in the lobby, if we hadn't overheard the fellow gossiping on the phone in the inner office and bragging that President Koxden's daughter had been a resident in Suite A for a short time."

The woodmen were much diverted but not, alas, Princess Dorothy. As a non-Ozite she heard the cawing of the crow and the chirping of the robin as no more than that. But strangely too, whereas in Oz everybody could understand everybody, in Seattle Kaggi-Karr could not grasp what Dorothy said either. The robin had to interpret for her in bird language.

The other side of the coin was that Kaggi-Karr from Alternate Oz understood perfectly the speech of the Soviet captors of the refugees from the flight of the dragon. On that tiny detail hangs all the fabric of this tale. For in the harried moments during the rounding up of the shipwrecked Ozites K.K., trying to look as much as possible like a plain old Alaska crow and a natural part of the landscape, fluttered near enough to hear the soldiers, talking (whether Uzbeks, Mongols, or Muscovites) Russian and referring to where they intended taking the prisoners.

For Kaggi-Karr it was now of the greatest possible concern to organize a task force to follow her lead and go to the rescue! Let it be said in praise of those intrepid ten woodmen that they saw the handwriting on the wall and volunteered to play heroes before the crow had to ask them. They didn't know a thing about rescuing people from Soviet prison camps but they were willing to try. Secretly, to himself, perhaps more than one woodman said, 'Even if worst comes to worst we can't die in the attempt. Our magic will see to that.' So they put up their hands and stepped forward.

As soon as somebody translated for Dorothy, the spunky girl insisted on being one of the rescue party. The woodmen tried to stop her. She wouldn't hear of it. Then somebody interpreted for the crow what was going on and K.K. let out a mighty squawk. "No!" she stormed. "Now listen, men, time is of the essence. We don't want any nonsense here. Ms Dorothy is

very brave and all that, and many's the time I've fetched her Other-Oz equivalents back to the Magic Land to save the bacon. But this time it's not make-believe. This is the real world! On commando-type mercy missions women are a pain in the neck (except one or two of us, of course). Instead of helping to rescue anybody they get stuck in a glitch that wouldn't have happened except for their frailty — or gorgeousness! — or both, and end up having to be rescued themselves, which always costs one or more of the real rescuers their necks. That's not going to happen this time. Tell the Princess she's wanted back in Oz! Make up some story. But lose her!"

That was a sad reversal of the traditional Volkovian situation. The woodmen were not very fond of breaking the news of the crow's decision to the Kansas heroine. Finally Albero B., who was generally considered to be the most sensitive and imaginative of the woodmen, essayed to say, "We think somebody ought to report back to Queen Ozma on what's happening and what's planned. Won't you do that, doctor? And it would be good to alert her to keep on keeping an eye on us in the Magic Picture. What we think we'll do is this..."

Thus, included after a fashion in the enterprize, Dorothy let herself be mollified into journeying back to Oz.

C H A P T E R T H I R T Y - S E V E N

Cindy Lou played it cool. She agreed with herself in Ms Mulroon's hotel room that whatever happened she wasn't going to panic. Monique had come back from *her* disappearing act with an emerald box. Cindy Lou intended to do no less. And she wasn't going to do it by breaking into hysterics when she found herself, *if* she found herself, in a wholly different setting far away.

She closed her eyes and began to plan a little speech, beginning "Dear miss princess—" Then when nothing seemed to be happening she opened them again.

Well, that was a blast! indeed. She was not any longer in the hotel room, but she wasn't in any green palace either! Fairy princesses were conspicuous by their absence. What she did see was the inside of a biggish (blue-violet!) room looking like an electrician's nightmare. Everywhere, on tables from walls and ceiling, hung wires, projected cranes and pulleys, or bubbled pots and "test tubes." At a far work bench a wizened-ish-looking man bent over beneath a bright shaded light looking at something through a jeweler's eye-piece,

Cindy remembered that she was going to play it cool. She gave a little pull to her girdle, fluffed the back of her platinum hair, and then strolled through the jungle of wires and pulleys

to the table. "Hullo there," she whispered huskily, sounding a little like Mae West.

Even so the fellow jumped and dropped his ocular. "Goodness me. Where did you come from?"

Cindy continued to play it cool. She didn't say. Instead, she answered, "I was expecting to meet—er, Princess Ozma. Is she... around?"

"Ozma!? Here—in the outback? Why, no—"

"They said I'd—umm, find myself in front of—well, a fairy princess!... I don't understand..."

"I think I do." The Wizard Wam was a pretty bright button and he sized up in a moment, on the basis of these scanty clues, something of what must have happened. "Did you come here by the use of—well, magic?"

"Yes." A beautiful white grin split the American woman's rich-chocolate face. So Ms Mulroony's "charm" wasn't completely off the beam? "But I was supposed to show up near somebody called Princess Ozma."

"And instead you arrived in the presence of a little old magician named Wam." It was Wam's turn to smile. "Don't worry, my dear. Everything will be all right. Did you use a ring and a sort of a watch-fob?.. I thought so. You got hold of one of a batch I turned out several weeks ago. My grandson was to take them along on a flight to the—er, outer world. I've been wondering how he got on..."

"I don't know anything about that... sir," hesitated Cindy. "A friend of mine had the trick. She used it on me..."

"She'? Curiouser and curiouser." Wam looked puzzled and thoughtful, then, "But come! Let's go to the house. I'd like you to meet my wife - and we'll have a cup of tea. There's a lot of questions we'd probably both like to get answered."

Cindy Lou certainly didn't feel threatened by anything that had happened yet and she followed along willingly. As they stepped outside she looked up at the enormous and strangely balloony-shaped building they had just quitted. She thought it looked like a big soft airplane hangar, if one could imagine such

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a thing. "What a funny building," she said before she could stop herself.

"Oh, the barn?" said Wam. "I had a very large guest at one time. This was his quarters^s. But it hasn't been used in about a century now - except for the workshop I installed there."

Cindy Lou was unprepared for the immediately next sensation. The sun! and the fresh air! The colors! It was years now since anyone in America had seen the sun otherwise than through a thick haze that ranged from dark ochre to grey-black in hue. Admittedly there was a thin haze in the air here too but nothing to be compared with the smog blackout in America. And then the smell; not of rotten eggs and rancid butter but of something... sweet! Hyacinths! It was also years since she'd smelled a hyacinth and Cindy wasn't even completely sure that was the name of what she thought she smelled now. She just knew she loved it. And the blue grass (Cindy was from Kentucky but she hadn't seen grass *this* blue there) and violet-blue-leaved trees and the blue (well, grey-blue) sky! It was like fairyland... It WAS fairyland.

Mrs Wam was all kindness and complacency. It came out in conversation that she had once been a Maid of Light and, in her yet ethereal blondness, dark Cindy Lou thought the lady still looked made of light. Mrs Wam served up a yummy cold collation, plus the promised warm beverage, with just a hint of—was it blueberry cordial?—in it. By the end of this session of tea and sympathy the American was pretty sure she didn't care about ever going back to whatever Portland, not to mention the streets of Philadelphia, had to offer.

Far was it from Wizard Wam to question the dispositions of his sovereign. If the arrangements of Princess Ozma had resulted in the arrival of this unusual-looking but quite pleasant-seeming woman in Oz he was not going to appear unwelcoming. "What do you think, my dear?" he said, turning to Lucinda, his wife. "The guest room—for a few days? And then we'll see. What would you like to do?" This to Cindy Lou. "How did you spend

§ See *Uncle Henry & Aunt Em in Oz*. Ed's note.

your time in America?"

The negress gulped. She should have been prepared for this question—but she wasn't. Finally she got out; "I was—er, a professional woman."

"Splendid," thought Wam and said so. "Which profession?"

"The oldest." The jest came out before Cindy knew what she was about.

Mrs Wam picked up the cue. "Oh, a housewife."

"Well, no, not exactly."

"Oh?" The two Ozites looked puzzled. But it was clear they were expecting an answer. Cindy Lou knew she was for it. Still she threshed about for a phrase that would soften the blow. "I was a lady of the evening."

"I'm sure you were a lady at all times, my dear," said Wamuppirovocuck benignly.

"I was—a call girl," muttered the guest.

"Oh, interesting," said Mrs Wam, delighted.

"Is that like a call-boy?" She sometimes glanced through the odd number of "Stage" or "Variety".

"Not exactly," confessed the American.

"You were an actress then?"

"Well-l, some people call us that. But I wasn't on the stage. I was on the streets."

"On the streets?" And the Wams, Mr and Mrs, looked at each other perplexed.

"I was a floozy!" blurted Cindy Lou.

That seemed to ring a bell. "I think I've heard of those, dear," Wam said to his wife sagely. "It's like a woozy, only American style."

"A woozy?" said the negress. Now it ,was her turn to be mystified.

"Well, no," retracted Wam. "You're really not at all like a woozy... A 'floozy', you say? "

"Yeah. Like a tart."

"Oh, yes!" said Mrs Wam enthusiastically. "I like a nice tart myself. Do you have a special recipe? People are kind enough to

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say my gooseberry ones are rather good." Then Cindy Lou had an inspiration. She'd once gone to Bermuda for a weekend and recalled that when she had to fill in a card at customs somebody had said "Write 'spinster' under 'Occupation'."

"I'm a spinster!" she announced in triumph.

"Ah," sighed host and hostess with satisfaction, "of course. 'When Adam delved and Eve span...' Of course it's the oldest profession! ...along with delving. How silly of us not to have remembered."

Mme Lucinda followed it up with; "There's an old spinning wheel in the parlor! You may use that whenever you like, Cindy Lou. I'll order in some wool this afternoon."

Cindy wondered in dismay how she was going to manage that caper. But that was a small hurdle compared to the one she'd just cleared.

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

The ten woodmen flew to Juneau. All civilian air traffic WITHIN Alaska was suspended for the duration of hostilities. Even surface travel was frowned upon. The authorities wanted rather to evacuate people *from* the state as long as it was going to be the front-line, but after all they

couldn't forbid people to go to their homes. The woodmen pretended their home was Nome.

Now, safely within the state though they were, how were they going to get across it? They hurried from the airport direct to the Log Cabin Visitor Center on Main Street, staring around them in awe at the mountains that rose up on every side. And wasn't that a 200-foot-high glacier face just up at the end of the street? No, they must be seeing things.

The young lady in the tourist bureau was most obliging. She had disappointments in store though for the intrepid woodmen. "The Marine Highway?" she repeated.

"Yes. People on the plane were talking about it. We understand that all travel around here is by sea, and since we've seen your mountains crowding right down to the water we believe it. So we'd like ten tickets on the Marine Highway—out to the west."

"I'm afraid you've had it," said the girl with a regretful laugh.

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"I mean, the Marine Highway's for getting TO Juneau—from all the other ports down the length of the Panhandle. There's the odd cargo boat that goes that way but there's no scheduled passenger service out along the open ocean—to Cordova and so on, if that's what you mean..?"

"Cordova? Maybe we'd better look at a map," suggested the woodmen's spokesman. They'd probably have been well advised to do that a good deal earlier on but when the Ozites got Kaggi-Karr's alarming report they had just stampeded to the airport and that was that. They knew from the crow's tale of her struggles to reach them that the state of Alaska was pretty big, but just HOW big they didn't grasp till the young lady spread out a comfortably large-scale map there on the counter in Juneau.

For one thing, Alaska was a fifth as big as the whole of the rest of the United States together. Bigger than Texas? Yes, and with California, Montana, and several other states piled on top. Superimposing the map of Alaska on that of the 'lower' U.S., the big state's southern island chain and coast, from Attu to Ketchikan, would stretch from the Pacific shore to the Atlantic.

"Phew!" said Forrest Sawyer. "We had no idea. Er—" (suddenly remembering that his home was Nome) "that is, about the rest of the state. Our home's in Nome—and we gotta get back there."

"Oh, dear," said the clerk and looked rather aghast. "That's going to be pretty impossible. The Russians have landed on your Seward peninsula. Haven't you heard? Nome is war headquarters. The only way to get in there is by military plane. I don't suppose you know anyone high up?"

As a matter of fact they knew the Commander-in-Chief, but it was a little late in the day to think of calling in the president for an assist. The first thing he would do would be to rule out any such hare-brained rescue plan as this of the woodmen's. The prospect did indeed look hopeless and the ten men were suitably depressed.

Then Sawyer raised his shoulders as if taking fresh courage. "We can but try," he said and looked to the others for their

assent, which came unhesitatingly in the form of nods and "yeahs".

They continued to gaze at the map in wonderment. When you got right down to it, Alaska was geographically *very* strange. It seemed quite perverse that the southern "Panhandle" section should be considered one entity with the vast rest of the state at all. This was brought out when, failing a convenient sea route, Woody H. asked about going west by road.

"Oh, there's no road," assured the young woman confidently. "Getting out of Juneau by road is out of the question. Look."

Her finger pointed again. "You saw the mountains? Tunneling for a road could be done, I suppose, but see: there—and there; those are glaciers! coming right down to the open ocean. With the best will in the world there's no way you can build a highway across a glacier."

"How ever did the place get laid out so peculiarly?" wondered a woodman. "A territory where it's impossible to get from one part to another dry-shod."

"Blame that on the Russians too," laughed the girl. "In the early days it was agreed between the Russians and the British government that Russia would own all the coastline up to the crests of the nearby Coast Range. I guess they hadn't looked close to see there are places where the mountains amount to cliffs shooting straight up out of the water. Look!" she commanded again and showed a spot on the map where British Columbian sovereignty came right down to the headwaters of Glacier Bay. "That bit's quite unusual, you know; a place where two parts of a state, both of them on the mainland, cannot be reached, one from the other, without going out of the state or at least across water." Then the girl, who was clearly something of a geography buff, mentioned the two halves of Michigan, Lake of the Woods in Minnesota, and Virginia's Cape Charles.

"So what do we do?" pleaded the woodmen and threw themselves on her mercy.

"It's pesky," she admitted, "that they've stopped all civilian flying inside Alaska.

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I know it's to stop fatalities from cruising Russian planes but it's going to work terrible hardships on people who are dependent on the bush pilots—for everything. But there's nothing for it. You're going to have to go overland."

"I thought you said it's impossible!" blurted several voices at once.

"Oh, yes—keeping *inside* the state. But everybody crosses Canada without thinking twice. It's no trouble—" (But when four of the men remembered how they'd crashed in a swamp the last time they were in that part of the world, they didn't agree with her.) "Your passports are in order?"

Yes, when they first started shunting them around from pillar to post the American authorities had at any rate facilitated the woodmen's moves by issuing them all courtesy passports. 184/

"Not that they'll even ask to see them at the frontier," Went on the girl. "They usually don't—but this war situation may change things... Now you'll get a bit of a a ride, after all, on the Marine Highway," she went on consolingly. "That's the M.V. Fairweather that goes up the Lynn Canal to Haines. There you can get the bus, with connections right across the Yukon territory and as far as Fairbanks, well into the western interior—"

"That sounds all right," the woodmen said. They began to take a little heart.

"OR," went on the amiable clerk, "you might like to take the narrow-gauge railroad from Skagway to Whitehorse, and then the bus on from there."

"Gee, I don't know," hummed Forrest. "'Narrow gauge': wouldn't that be pretty slow?"

"Eight hours to Whitehorse," informed the girl. "With stops at every crossroad, depending I doubt if the bus would be any faster. Then when she mentioned that, in the interest of local color and atmosphere, two century-old railway coaches called "Lake Muncho" and "Lake Emerald" formed part of the train, the Woodmen plunked down their money for rail tickets without a further backward glance. A wave of nostalgia

swept over them all.

The only slightly dissenting voice was that of Quadling nationalist and romantic Albero Boscaiolo. "You'd think there'd be one called 'Lake Quad' ! " he exclaimed. "It's a natural!"

But Forrest Sawyer, an old Muncho, soon talked him around.

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

Monique was doing a land-office business. When she continued to hear nothing from Cindy Lou she quickly shifted into high gear. From the brilliantly redecorated offices in Portland she sent two hundred people to Oz within a week. Still no squawks from the promised land. Emboldened, made even more brazen than she was by nature, Monique rushed Harriet and Janine off to open branch offices in Seattle and San Francisco. "Rent any old warehouse you can get cheap," she commanded. "It doesn't matter what it looks like. These suckers will shop anywhere and pay anything to get to Oz! What is it?!: the pollution? It *is* getting so you can't go out on the street without your gas-mask on. Or just the general debasing of the quality of life these days?" she posited, waxing philosophical. "Or maybe it's the war - and that can't last forever! We gotta strike while the iron is hot. I'll fly in at each of your places once a week to do the actual touch-and-going."

Once a week? But even with the feverish trade at Portland that still only filled up three days out of the seven. Monique grabbed salesgirls, practically off the streets, to man (sorry! to woman) offices in Los Angeles, San Diego, Las Vegas, and Salt Lake City, and rushed around with the women finding them premises and getting them installed. By the end of another week

a thousand people had gone to Oz.

What was it like in that forest on the Munchkin-Gillikin border when these unlocked-for visitors began arriving?

Wammuppirovocuck took it in stride. There's no denying he did rather a double take the day he looked out the window and saw a crowd of people in shorts, Hawaiian shirts, and beach hats bearing down on his home with suitcases at the ready. He ran to the parlor and hollered in at Cindy Lou at the spinning wheel, where she was trying her best to look like an adept: "Some of your friends have arrived! Come and help me receive them." And as she joined him: "I'll admit I didn't expect so many or so soon."

Cindy didn't know of any friends who were expected at all but she was not in much doubt about what had happened. It was not without misgiving that she went outside.

A babble of voices reached their ears:

"I wanna see the manager!"

"When does the bus leave?"

"Is this included?"

"Where's the bathroom?"

"I want my money back!"

Wam tried ineffectually to soothe the discontented crowd. Mme Lucinda came out and sought, in her turn, to calm them with her charm. A couple of the couple's younger children appeared from the nursery and succeeded in diverting the attention of a few of the trippers.

"We'll get them into the barn," announced Wam. "I'll redesign it as a dormitory. With magic that won't take long. How many do you think there'll be, altogether?"

Cindy just stared. She hadn't a clue. "The Prince of Wates was pretty big by the end," said Wam cryptically. "I should think there'd be room for about eight hundred one-man cubicles. After that we'll have to see."

The fact that they shared given names (though in reverse order) was a great bond between Mme Lucinda and her first-arriving guest. The hostess at once dropped whatever she was

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doing and went to play co-tour guide with Cindy Lou.

"Where's the magic?! I wanna see the magic!" demanded a little round dark woman.

"I was told diamonds grow on trees here.

I want to load up," declared an eager gentleman and flourished an empty bushel-basket-size hamper.

"We were promised rides on a dragon," announced the mother of four. "I don't see any dragons."

"They're around back, in the garage, of course," fibbed Cindy Lou and began to lead the mob the twenty yards to the door of the big blue-violet barn.

Another large contingent arrived that evening. Fortunately the interior restructuring and decorating of the barn had already taken place and people could go right to their individual rooms.

All went merry as a marriage bell. Wam had magic to help. When one insistent group of Japanese with three cameras each demanded the "Two-Week Grand Tour" he scribbled a note and sent them by Hurry Cane to his old friend, the Countess of Gillequin in the north of the land of the Gillikins. She was requested to put them up for a night, then wish them on to King Randy in Regalia.

One party of do-it-yourself tourists with backpacks were sent off with self-refillable lunch pails into the Forest of Eternal Night. Wam thought that would keep them busy for at least a month.

Another large bunch had definite ideas about what they wanted to see. Doing a head count Wam found they would just about fill a bus, so he dispatched the group to Mrs Carmichael with the suggestion that if the old bus was still roadworthy that she had come to Oz in and her driver friend still in good form she might care to accompany the newcomers on a visit to Fuddlecumjig, Miss Cuttenclip's paper-doll town, and the valley of the (now civilized) Hammer Heads.

Then with a rubbing of hands he waited for the next wish-load to appear from the great world.

Wam made his big mistake when he wrote to the Consolidated Scalawagon Works in the industrial suburbs of the

Emerald City. A number of forthright business types from Phoenix and L.A. had insisted on having their own automobiles. They were joined by some smash-'n-grab musicians who had found out by hearsay about the absence of heavy-rock music in the townships of Oz. With shouts of "It's undemocratic!" and "Open up for art!" they required to have transpo laid on for getting about on concert tours.

When the unusual order for 89 scalawagons to be delivered deep in the remote fastnesses of the Gillikin-Munchkin borderland came in, the plant manager sent it to Princess Ozma, as Honorary Chairwoman of the board of directors, for approval. She in turn sent for Zip P.O. Choggolak, as he now styled himself since being appointed Postmaster General of Oz.

Zip hadn't been doing anything in particular except just expediting letters all the while his wife and son had been gadding about in the great world. Frankly, he thought it was about time he was invited to get into the act. However, he was as mystified as the Girl Ruler when the latter said, "Dear me dear Zip, whatever can your father be up to? wanting eighty-nine scalawagons."

"It's a mystery to me, your grace. Do you think it'd be a good idea if I pop over there to have a look?"

"Maybe that would be best. Just a moment while I go get the Magic Belt. I'm not equipped, as you know, to just 'beam you in' on your dad... Oh, and be sure to bring my warmest personal greetings to both your parents."

C H A P T E R F O R T Y

The bus trip to Fairbanks proved rather wearisome. As a matter of principal Forrest S. urged all his companions to relax whenever they were confined for a time to one form or another of transportation on their quest. "We've done the best we can, trying to get the fastest possible onward connections. I know the days are running on but it can't do any good, chafing and worrying while we're on a boat or train or whatever; it won't make it go any faster. So relax. Look out the windows and enjoy the trip if you can."

That advice was okay while they sailed up Lynn Canal. The woodmen stayed on deck on the old Fairweather—for a while, that is, until the fall of soot drove them indoors again, to stare out from behind the extra-large picture windows. "Quite pretty round here," said someone, recalling their old refrain from on the road in New Zealand. The usual rejoinder followed: "That is, if you could see it."

"Oh, I don't know. A black glacier's quite fun. I got a glimpse of one just now when I was out. Look: it says here in the guide book you can see snowy mountains, steep timbered slopes, and a wealth of sea and bird life—"

"Lemme see that," snapped Arbol and grabbed the book. "No wonder: 'copyright 1983'. Even then it doesn't say what

color the snow was. As we keep reminding ourselves, there's twice as many people now as there were in the world then—and three times as much industry."

"Never mind. We can listen to the narrator telling us what's out there even if we can't see it. And yum: I'm going to have another cocktail." The hostesses were attentive and if there was no feast for eyes outside there was a feast for palates within.

Sitting in the Lake Emerald car later, they tried to catch sight of the advertised waterfalls, gorge, lakes, glimmering meadows, and fields of wildflowers but, alas, it was not only the meadows that had gone glimmering.

The train serpented up and down and around mountains. Luckily none of the woodmen were photography buffs. Thus, they felt no frustration at not being able to get a photograph of the train maneuvering hairpin curves as its engine disappeared into tunnels in rocky mountainsides; there was too much smoke in the air. However, after Fraser at the summit of the pass it seemed as if the atmosphere cleared marginally. Now they could see almost as far as they could in New Zealand.

That was the fun part, such as it was. The bus trip from Whitehorse was just enervating. It was dreary treeless tundra most of the way but the real annoyance was the road itself. Where Alaska highways (they were to learn) were virtually all paved, even over the permafrost, the roads of the Canadian Yukon retained their antediluvian gravel nature. When you looked out the dust-matted windows all you could really see, as being near enough, was the flying gravel as it kept up a tattoo on the panes like the clack of glass popcorn. The woodmen were both physically and morally low as they hove into Fairbanks on the evening of the third day.

Here their number came into useful play. The ten fanned out, each one separately, to make what onward travel connections they could. When they met in their motel rooms later Tajar Madera could report that it was possible to carry on with bus travel as far as Kantishna on the slopes of the Alaska Range in one direction or as Ruby, down the Yukon River, in another.

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"They're pushing the road on to the confluence with the Koyukuk," Tajar announced; "that is, they were - till this war situation came along."

"Never mind that," quashed Bucheron A. "I ran into a bush pilot who's willing to smuggle us on to Ruby by plane in a fraction of the time. Shall we take it? The only thing is: he'll only do it for cash. It'll use up every cent we've got left. With a black market operation like this credit cards are no use."

Yes! they'd take it. Still, in the hired cars to the flying field under cover of darkness, Waldo Baumschneider relayed what he'd found out. "I asked about river travel. There's a sidewheeler steamer goes down the Chena once a week. It left yesterday." Everybody groaned. "But I also found out about smaller boats. I learned we could rent a little outboard yacht with all necessary gear for a thousand dollars. Still, of course, the plane is quicker."

Forrest Sawyer was quick to pick up on that. "What about the same deal from Ruby on?! That could come in handy."

"Gee, I don't know, boss. But wait! the guy did say we could turn in the rig at other spots where they've got agencies. I know he mentioned Tanana and Fort Yukon..."

"Okay. We can always hope. Meanwhile we're in for this Wright brothers flight... Ruby..." Forrest mused on. "And we've had 'Emerald'. By the way, I've been studying that map. There's a 'Polychrome Pass' in Mount McKinley Park! And a village called Eureka. Not to mention the Baum spelling of 'Nome'."

"Yeah, I thought of that," chimed in Coupeur du Bois. "And did you know the nowhere spot where the Russians have landed on the mainland is called 'Tin City'?!"

The woodmen were off again on their favorite pastime of Oz nostalgia.

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

Actually the Russians were very polite to their captives. Naturally they were vexed that the aeronauts, whom they assumed to be Americans, had dared to show enough spunk to resist being herded sheep-like to a landing area in Siberia. When the strange dirigible crashed on American soil the convoy pilots panicked. They radioed the army outpost on Greater Diomedes that orders were to capture the aircraft at all costs, though in fact they had only been commanded to take it by *air*. When the commando unit panicked in turn and failed to contact supreme headquarters before launching a little amphibious operation, the war was on. Still, that didn't mean they were going to profit by roughing up the downed air travelers.

Those were fraught moments when the command car, followed more slowly by a small amphibious tank, caught up with the fleeing Ozites. Lestar, always intelligently alert, had taken note of the departure of Kaggi-Karr and her companion. There was just a chance rescue might follow as a result. Better not panic just yet! When he got a chance he passed the word to his companions.

Nobody was in tears. Ex-General Jinjur was as plucky as any of the men. Still, there's no denying there were more white faces than pink ones among the Ozites when the confrontation took

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place. Four heavy men in thick cloth coats, with insignia on their 194/ fur-fronted hats, stalked towards them with pistols significantly not pointed.

One stepped forward with what passes in Russia for a smile and offered cigarettes. Silently the captives declined. Who was going to be the first to speak? All parties concerned were aware of the futility of rattling off anything in their native language. If there is one thing rarer than Russians who know English, it's Americans who know Russian. In the present case, however, it was not, as the captors supposed, Americans who were involved but Ozites and among their number was one who had a professional smattering of languages. Dr.Em. H.M. Wogglebug was fluent in Italian and Swahili and had also had occasion to dabble slightly in Russian. He could rattle off phrases like "Volshebnik Izumrodnovo Goroda" and "sem podzernich korolya" with perfect ease. Such only might seem a bit frivolous in the present circumstances. The professor always memorized a favorite droll sentence in each language he sampled (just to startle people with at cocktail parties, when this or that language was mentioned). Thus he could say 'En af vores missekatte er død' or 'J'aime les bananes parce-qu'ils n'ont pas d'os.' But he stopped short now of saying 'On navodyit na menya stroshnuyu tosku' as being even more unpolitic than those book titles.

He needn't have worried. Little Lestar stepped forward and with grave but perfect accent said, "Zdrastvuiye! Ya nazivayoos Lestar—" and he proceeded to introduce his companions.

Russians *can* smile. At least, they can grin. Huge ones split the faces of the four Soviet militaries and after that it was almost old-home week, so much cordiality was displayed. Before half an hour had passed one of the officers had actually apologized to Lestar for shooting them down (so to speak), though he immediately afterwards looked stern and said something harsh to make up.

The glum captives were briefly searched and the absence of weapons on them noted. Then they were conducted to the tank, which had gradually caught up with the command car. "For

your own safety," said (in Russian) the senior of the officers and indicated that the ten Ozites should climb up the cleats along the rear of the tank. Surprisingly there was adequate room for all, plus the tank crew, down inside. The officers did not follow. Their duty was to investigate the collapsed and sprawling 'dragon'.

To the tune of muffled booms in the distance and the occasional swift tattoo of machine-gun fire the tank moved off. The Ozites crouched on camp stools in the confined interior. Henk couldn't forget that the last thing he'd seen before descending inside was one of the white buildings in the east exploding into a shower of kindling. He guessed it was war after all.

The tank presently proved its amphibiosity. The captives could tell by the lurching sick-making motions of the vehicle that it was riding the waves. The geography of the region was unknown to any of the Oz people save Koboble the navigator and Henkomankatogale and to them only very sketchily. They weren't to realize that American Diomedea was only three miles distant from Russian. Nevertheless they had cause to be glad of the circumstance. The weakest-stomached of the lot (Professor Wogglebug—but then he'd had so little practice in the management of a human anatomy) was just on the brink of a small tragedy when the tank treads gripped pebbles and ground ashore on the farthest-east outlier of Siberia.

Lestar and his alternate-Oz compatriots kept their ears cocked and by the time the group had climbed out of the amphibian onto a mat of blackish-green tundra such as they had just left on the other island, we was able to whisper the word along to the rest that apparently they were to be flown to Moscow that night.

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

Mrs Choggolak was obviously not going to be left out of any plans her husband had for important undertakings out and about in Oz. She'd been feeling frightfully at loose ends since her unsatisfactory and almost impromptu return from America.

She and her chums talked for days about her memories of a half year or more in the outer world but it gnawed at Dorothy seriously that she had not been able to return covered with glory. Her only consolation was that in every situation she had surely done the best she could. The situations had merely been unlucky ones.

On her appearance in the Palace of Magic her first dash had been into the arms of her husband Zip. She had to bring him word of the awful fate of their child: forced down on a bleak shelf of rock in the Bering Sea. Still, she had Kaggi-Karr's word for it that Henk and all his companions had emerged unscathed from the crash. Nothing *too* terrible was going to happen to them now. After all a rescue party was even now on its way to them. Dorothy laughed ruefully, recalling the gormless woodmen.

"You don't think I should invoke special magic and whisk them all; aeronauts, woodmen, and everybody, back here?" asked Fairy Ozma who was standing by.

"Oh, no, that would be such a flat ending!" exclaimed

Dorothy, who was herself at that moment suffering from abortia enterpritis. "Let the woodmen - and, yes, the others too—have their adventure out. Who knows? they might even succeed in the end in accomplishing some of what we all set out to do."

They left it at that then. Ozma did, however, leave the Magic Picture turned on round the clock so they had the aeronauts or the woodmen constantly in focus and if they found them in a crisis they could do something.

Zip and Dorothy got Ozma to transport them in a twinkling to the house in Legerdemain Lane. What was their astonishment to find the grounds crawling with people (who didn't look the least bit Ozian) and most of the windows in the huge blue barn displaying more of the same. Gone was the bucolic charm of the remote deep-country setting. The blare of smash music was deafening. (The difference between smash and its predecessor rock was that the new sound no longer made any pretense to tune and the singing was just screaming with no attempt at articulated words.)

Dorothy demanded an explanation. "Oh, hi, daughter-in-law," said the Wizard Wam. "And Zip! You here too? Splendid! What's the story?... Oh, yes, the music; it is pretty frightful, isn't it?" he said, noticing the couple's hands clapped to their ears. "But that lot'll be gone, soon as we can get in a shipment of scalawagons. Actually, I'd been planning to write the Queen and find out what her further plans were for the new colonists."

"The Queen'? Do you mean Ozma?" said Dorothy when she had lowered her hands and Wam's remark been repeated. "Plans for colonists'. Whatever do you mean?"

Wam in turn looked surprised. "Why, these folks have all made use of some return-to-Oz homing devices I supplied to Ozma and Glinda weeks ago. It must have been at the Princess' invitation...?"

Thus belatedly did the whole fearful situation become revealed to those who were going to have to deal with it. Dorothy just hurriedly conveyed Ozma's greetings to Mme Lucinda as she was directed to the second floor of the barn (now

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called the 'Hostel'). There she was to seek a "Miss Cindy Lou" who, it appeared, had taken over the whole of that floor for a cottage industry.

Not only spinning but weaving and dressmaking were going on at full tilt, carried out by the more earnest and industrious of the new "colonists". Cindy had exchanged her form-fitting sequined dress for a sensible overall and her lacquered locks were confined by a snug-tied head scarf.

"Good heavens!" cried Dr Choggolak. "I remember you! You were one of the ten woodmen's—er, women friends."

"That's right," admitted the negress quite readily. "And you were the lahdidah—oh, sorry—ladylike 'princess' in the hotel room in Seattle."

But nobody shook hands.

It was Dorothy's sorry duty - taken up with a good deal of verve - to get to the bottom of the sordid tale of theft and deceit that had resulted in this unlooked-for influx of new residents to Oz. "Ozma will be furious," she cried, although in fact it was Dorothy herself who was more given—at *widely* separated intervals—to spells of furiosity than the equable-natured little fairy ruler herself.

Zip elected (and was glad of the excuse) to stay on for a visit and good old gossip-fest with his dad and mother rather than return with the agitated Dorothy to the Emerald City. There the scene was no more delightful than he might have anticipated. Dorothy succeeded in infecting her friend Ozma with her own alarm at the future of Oz if mass migrations to the fairyland were going to be allowed to go on at the present rate.

Ozma panicked mildly. She called Sorceress Glinda on her two-way wrist radio. "Oh, Glinda darling, do get up here quick! Something too awful has happened..." She gave the barest details and rang off, then ran to the tower apartment of the Wizard of Oz, with Dorothy sprinting behind her. From Diggs' laboratory phone they called the Royal Historian and the genial author was soon jogging to the palace from the Wimugiqua Hotel.

They discussed aspects of the situation while waiting for Glinda to show up. Ozma wrung her hands. Even Princess Dorothy, though gratified to be the bearer of important (even if bad) news, was upset to see how the little queen, for almost the first time anyone could remember, had lost her cool. Not since her misadventures with Atmos the air-man^s had anyone seen the Princess Regnant of Oz in floods of tears. Even the supposed death of everyone's friend Button Bright^{ss}, had only made her very sad, not actually breaking down.

"Oh," she moaned. "Isn't it dreadful? Rock musicians in Oz! And businessmen! It was bad enough with floozies, but now this—"

"There's only one floozy, dear," Dorothy tried to comfort her friend. "And actually she seems to be pulling her weight quite praiseworthy." Dorothy was at all times fair.

"But Ms Mulroony's also been, and with the ring-and-key she may well be back. But it's not that, nor anything else that's *already* happened, that bothers me so much. It's what's going to happen—what *has* to happen."

"Dear us," said the others, puzzled. "What's that?"

"Why, don't you see?!" Ozma stopped her tears and stared wide-eyed. She couldn't believe that her friends, none of whom was dopey, had not seen as far and as fast as herself. "We must close Oz! There's no telling how many thousands that woman will send here! It's bad enough with all the refugees camped around the outer periphery; the ones that came here over-land. That situation we can control. But Ms Mulroony's operation sends people right inside Oz! and there's no way to stop her... except one. We're going to have to seal off the country hermetically. No one, even with the strongest magic, is ever to be able to come here again. And that's what breaks my heart!"

Then she dissolved in tears again.

It was now the others' turn to stare wildly. Seal off Oz?! But what about the dragon voyagers?! and Dorothy's own son? And

§ See *The Hungry Tiger of Oz*.

§§ See *The Magic Mirror of Oz*. Editor's notes.

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the poor old woodmen! What about them?

When Glinda arrived that was the first item on the agenda and they went into deep conference. "We must fetch them all back - willy nilly," declared the sorceress, and groaned inwardly. The thing could be done, but was immensely difficult. Indeed, as she racked her memory, the good witch could think of no occasion throughout Oz history when the procedure had been tried; to fetch away to the fairyland an individual from the outer world who was neither expecting nor desiring it.

A journey to Oz for someone actively willing it and at the same time in possession of the requisite magic implement(s), be it wishing ring or magic umbrella or silver shoes, was simpler than the simplest. Only slightly more complicated was it to bring to the magic land a person wanting it who, however, had no tools of sorcery to assist in the transportation. But to snatch away a person in the outer world who had not been informed and was not expecting it; that was hard. Glinda quailed at the thought of the sheer spiritual and technical sweat involved.

Thus it was she who proposed a motion to wait a few more days before plunking down permoseal all around Oz. "Their missions are hopeless," she said. "They must see that. Surely before long they'll come home by themselves... Besides, without Henkomankatogale here to read his plans for me, I don't even know if I *can* build this dome over Oz..!"

C H A P T E R F O R T Y - T H R E E

In fact, the departure for Moscow was held up a few days. The party investigating the crashed airship were very much puzzled by what they found. Where they had expected the very latest in Western perfection of offensive weapons and surveillance instruments they found objects whose utility they did not at all understand. They decided there had better be some arm-twisting on the spot and a detailed explanation required of those most likely to know the significance of the equipment.

Naturally the Ozites were cheered when they heard they were not immediately to be transported into the heart of the Kremlin, whence they could never be rescued. Just a very few days and surely Kaggi-Karr would have fetched the finest in Israeli commando teams, hired by the great and good friend of Israel, Pres. Koxden, whom the Ozites also knew to be a warm supporter of Oz and champion of Princess Dorothy, whom Kaggi-Karr would be meeting in Seattle. Just spin out the time, that was all.

“What day is this? Thursday?” said Jinjur when the group were allowed a half hour to confer among themselves before having their arms twisted again or possibly finger nails removed. “We’ll say those are highly specialized implements keyed to a master switch in our home country and that the switch is only

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thrown on Wednesdays.”

The proposal was hare-brained but they were grasping at straws, so they bought it. Unfortunately it backfired. There was a heavy exchange of telephone and radio messages with Moscow that only occupied two days. Then word was brought to the anxious captives; “The entire contents of the downed aircraft and the foreign personnel could conveniently be transferred to Supreme Headquarters within the interval stated.” Consequently they would lift off that night, Saturday.

There went the dream of rescue. Now all the prisoners had to hope for was that the cargo jet they were to do the Asian journey in would be shot down at take-off, whereupon they would try to arrange surviving a second air crash.

Alas, the sights and sounds they had been witnesses to on Little Diomedes had been misleading. Just as World War I had made the world safe for democracy, World War II had made the world safe for war. For more than half a century now no war-making power had dreamed of using nuclear bombs to bring about a drastic and effective stop to any hostilities. You could start a war nowadays in perfect confidence that it could go on indefinitely with the use of only comfortable safe old conventional weapons. The present conflict was no exception. American and Soviet troops in Alaska kept up a little target practice when they saw anyone moving on the opposing side, as they settled in snugly, armed with rifles and machine guns and with anti-aircraft artillery that would do to bring down any mere strafing fighter planes that came too close. However, there was nothing capable of downing a transport plane taking off eighty miles behind the lines. Those lines, by the way, now stretched across the nose of the Seward Peninsula.

The flight to the Russian capital was uneventful. The prisoners were treated well. They even had the opportunity to become enthusiastic about a Russian dish called pirozhki, a delightfully chewy pastry shell filled with indefinable but most savory mixed bits. Lestar said they were as good as you could get in his own native version of Oz, even if they had merely been microwaved

high above the Gobi Desert and the original cook's identity was all unknown.

Of course there were delays in Moscow. Their captors announced, all thought of the original Wednesday deadline forgotten, that some weeks would have to elapse before protocol could be attended to and all things put in readiness. The Chairman of the Party had been briefed. His curiosity was aroused and he himself was going to be present! at the solemn gathering when the "visitors" (as they now in a regular fest of fellowship were being called) would, with naturally the greatest good will, demonstrate the exact working of their secret weapons (which they were of course still assumed to be).

Ojo for one said he'd sooner die (if such a thing should have been possible) than to reveal to a lot of Russians the workings of Oz magic. But then Prof. Wogglebug took him to task. "My dear young fellow!" he exclaimed. "Have you forgotten that for that purpose only our voyage has been made?: to show to the world, to PROVE to the world, that Oz magic works. Princess Ozma and the Wizard and company did not instruct us; 'Convince the Americans (for example) of the efficacy of magic.' No! Everybody, the whole world, is, insofar as possible, to be brought to see the light. I personally think it's great good fortune we've been given this opportunity. And the contrast! Princess Dorothy could not get anyone in America to stand still a moment while she tried to sell magic. Now here are the Russians begging us to show them!"

After that speech everyone felt wonderfully cheered. Commander Henk even went so far as to summon their jailers and ask to have the finds from the crashed dragon brought to them in their cells so that they might practice with the devices and be able to put on a really proficient show when the appropriate Wednesday rolled around. Of course the guards saw through that ploy and sternly denied them any such access. They knew what the "visitors" would do the minute they had such weapons in their hands. Wouldn't they themselves, the guards, do the like?

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So the prisoners kicked their heels and waited. Then, one Wednesday, just after lunch, they were conducted through miles of passageways to a big white padded-walled room. Spectator desks behind transparent bullet-proof screens were ranged around three walls. Laid out on long tables in the center of the room was all the sadly jumbled but fairly whole-looking magic equipment from Oyhho II.

Henkomankatogale had to smile as he surveyed the scene. Those protective screens! How little the naive Russians suspected of what was coming. What use was a two-and-a-half-inch thick plate of indestructible plastic when you aimed a magic wand at what was behind it?

No seats were provided for the Ozites. They were expected to be on their toes and performing. They were routinely searched as they entered. Curiously, no move had ever been made to remove from them the rings and neck pendants they all wore. From the (auspicious) start the Soviets had not been out to be mean to them, just render them harmless, and what harm could a bit of jewellery do?

Now a uniformed guard silently opened a door in the back of the hall and a line of commissars filed in. Last of all came one wearing a genial smirk known to a generation of T.V. viewers throughout the world. He took his place behind the center screen, nodded, and the show could begin.

Jinjur, tacitly appointed mistress of ceremonies, had little artistry in her makeup. She just stumped military-fashion to the table, picked up what looked like a water pistol with a very blunt snout, aimed it in the air, and fired. As long as she held the trigger a tube of solid-looking vermilion coloring flowed out, and hung in the air. She released, then pressed again, and now a similar length of chrome yellow, like painter's pigment, was ejected; it just stayed in the air and very gradually and slowly began to sink. It could not be said to "float" — it looked too solid for that. It simply *was* there, suspended in the air. Next the young woman shot a streamer of ultramarine. Then came a pea-green one, another of burnt ochre, a silver one a chocolate-brown one,

and one of off-lack. Then a little tiny bolt of battleship grey, just to end off with.

Next Jinjur, with none of the airs and races of a mannequin, walked out into the 'field' of air-borne color bands and moved about freely among them. They didn't budge, other than their slow drift groundwards, but when the lengths of color and Jinjur's body tried to occupy the same physical space the color bands disappeared while the corresponding area of the woman's form appeared solidly dyed in the respective color. Thus from moment to moment she displayed a red head, a black back, a blue shoe.

She kept that up until, after about six minutes, the long 'sausages' of color came to rest on the floor, at which each in turn abruptly disappeared. Then Jinjur went back and rejoined her comrades.

Now ex-navigator Koboble stepped out. He could see the Russian spectators leaning forward, utterly perplexed at what they had just witnessed but with faces showing neither delight nor disgust, just stony attention. Koboble rummaged on one of the tables and took up a little black stick (a contribution of Oz Diggs, wizard). He twirled it in the air in a complicated, apparently pre-ordained series of passes, then tapped it three times on the table edge. One after another nine tiny piglets appeared on the table top. Rearing on their hind legs, they joined fore-trotters and danced a dainty minuet, treading carefully among the scattered items of magic junk. They took only one bow, then vanished.

But that was too much for Soviet gravity. The commissars broke into spontaneous applause. The Secretary of the Communist Party was seen to smile.

Now Jinjur led forward Professor Wogglebug who demonstrated a version of the pocket orchestra. He hummed, with a hint of entomic buzzing, "Ochi Chornya", "The Volga Boatmen", and not quite authentically, "Lara's Theme", then waited a moment until a fully orchestrated medley of the tunes burst deafeningly from every corner of the hall. The Russians put their

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hands to their ears but grinned recognitorily.

Lestar was next. He stepped forward and illustrated efficiently the use of the augury auger and the clever cleaver and the see saw. The latter seemed particularly to engage the imaginations of the Alter-Ozite's audience. As the little artisan sawed away at a corner of his table (which fortunately was of stainless steel and took no damage) and the flexible saw emitted a musical whining sound, Lestar 'orchestra-led' with his other arm, pointing first at his fellow travelers ranged behind the tables, then tapping his brow with a finger, and finishing off with a sweeping gesture directed at the esteemed onlookers.

Over a space of several seconds images of Princess Ozma, Sorceress Glinda, the Patchwork Girl, Oorfene Deuce, a hulking wooden soldier, and the Shaggy Man appeared in the room and moved about graciously, making bows in front of the protective plastic screens. The spectators seemed to grasp what was going on. After all these men had grown up on *Volshebnik Izumrudnogo Goroda* and *Urfin Dzuhs i yego Dyerevyannie Soldati* and they recognized the latter when they saw them. The saw went on squeaking away and suddenly an apparition was seen of a little overstuffed figure in a pointed hat decorated with emeralds. Next moment everyone was startled when Josef Stalin appeared, and then in quick succession Lenin, Kalinin, Molotov, Trotsky (very quickly suppressed), and a whole pantheon of Communist heroes. Now everyone got into the act and in a minute Princess Dorothy Choggolak, the Frogmen of Oz, and fairies Bastinda, Stella, and Gingemma were seen socializing with certain chesty dowdily dressed middle-aged women, presumably wives of the commissars. The Scarecrow of Oz shook hands with Strasheela. Then suddenly everyone was shocked by the arrival of a bevy of naked women who attempted to climb over the protective screens and approach the dignitaries.

Abruptly Lestar stopped sawing and all the figments vanished. The presenters breathed a sigh of relief.

Now Docent Henkomankatogale came forward, carrying a silver wand lightly in his right hand. He touched its tip to his

left forefinger tip and glanced about speculatively. His eye fell on young Ojo the Lucky and he made a come-hither gesture of the head. The youth stepped toward his leader with alacrity. Gone were his reservations about displaying the working of the magic.

Henk lifted the wand, uttered an incantation, touched Ojo with the staff, and in a twinkling the Oz boy had disappeared and in his place stood a little craggy-looking fellow with a long beard, clutching to his breast an earthenware pot full of something shining yellow. A leprechaun!

“Hey, presto!” cried Henk—and there was Ojo again. The leprechaun was gone, taking his pot of gold with him.

Next the docent changed his fiancée into a gazelle. He liked to think of her that way. To prove that he himself was just one of the boys Henk handed the wand to Ojo and whispered a word. The other Ozite spoke the spell and where Henk had stood was the spokesboy of the Lollipop Gym with his customary bouquet of paper flowers. As the midget, Henk walked forward to the Chairman’s shielded seat and strained upward to drop the bouquet over the top of the screen into his lap. The Chairman looked no end pleased. Having resumed his true shape and with Lestar as interpreter, the young engineer now enquired if any of the Commissars would care to try getting out of himself, being somebody else for awhile. This brought guffaws from all the Soviet officials and to a man they pointed at one burly dark-scowling individual who appeared to be utterly humorless. He was obviously the butt of the presidium.

Henk looked back to the Chairman, who nodded. Surprisingly, he was still clutching the Lollipop gymman’s bouquet.

Henkomankatogale beckoned to his interpreter Lestar and the two moved close to the chairman’s screen and spoke around it. Later Lestar remained on in intermittent chat with the august one. Meanwhile Henk stepped to the little gate door in the bank of spectators’ desk seats and signalled to the scowling bear, who grudgingly made his way over to where the Ozite could touch him with the wand.

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It was done. And there indeed stood a great shaggy seven-foot brown-black Russian bear, decked out in the uniform of a Commissar. A great gust of laughter, wonderment, and awe went up from his colleagues.

Nor did the babble die down afterward when, quickly, Henk undid the enchantment and the official lumbered back to his place. His closest-to associates leaned near to speak to him but he only grunted in reply.

Emboldened by that success and encouraged by the Soviets' obvious consensus, at least for a brief while, that magic was more fun than Communism, Henkomankatogale now did something daring, indeed a bit too daring. One wonders what went on in the mind of the usually so urbane and unflappable docent. Was it after all a spark of resentment that his expedition, with himself in charge, had come to so ignominious an end? That he had been able to do no more for his companions than let them be delivered into the power of a nation whose representatives, however affable-acting, had behaved toward them as aggressors without cause? That they were now constrained to perform before their captors like trained seals, without even a chair to sit down on, as if they were scarcely even 'people'?

However it may be, Henkomankatogale signed to little Lestar to come near him again. Through him he put the question to the Supreme Soviet of them all whether he himself would like to essay a transformation. To Henk's after all considerable surprise the Chairman in his usual 'affable' manner indicated assent. Perhaps something had been lost in translation. Perhaps he thought he was being invited himself to *perform* a transformation. However it may be, he did certainly rise from his place, make his way the couple of paces to the door-gate, and walk out onto the 'stage' beside the wand-wielding Ozite.

Henk hesitated only a second, then moved the wand through a swift pass, spoke speedily the magic words, reached across and tapped the chairman's shoulder before he knew where he was, and turned him into a monkey's uncle.

A gasp of horror arose from the spectators, Russians and

Ozites alike. A roar of rage was heard from the Soviet side—but also some titters. But not from the Chairape himself, who chattered benignly, scratched himself under his arms, and took a few tentative steps in his ballet skirt!

Aghast at what he had done Docent Henk lost no time in reversing the enchantment, tossed aside the wand, and hurried forward to utter, via his interpreter, various apologies and solicitous enquiries. He hoped most earnestly, he said, that the Honorable Chairman had suffered no discomfort during his forty-five seconds as—another.

“Why, no,” replied the great one. “I felt quite myself.”

Not a soul dared laugh.

Maybe the incident could have been passed off harmlessly but Henk was taking no chances. He turned abruptly, stepped to his Oz compatriots, and made a pre-arranged signal. As had been agreed days before, the Ozites twisted their rings, gripped their neck talismans, and mumbled “Pryzxql”. Instantly they vanished.

But, even more startlingly, Artisan Lestar—and one other—stayed behind.

C H A P T E R F O R T Y - F O U R

Ruby was not exactly the Ruby City of Oz. The first sight of the sub-Arctic community was somewhat grim. The tiny weathered buildings appeared almost lost in the expanse of dark tundra. As they surveyed it in the dawn's early light (while their pilot walked along thumb-counting his pack of greenbacks), the ten woodmen felt like they'd come to the end of the world. Only, alas, they hadn't. If it had been the end of the world (for surely one such end is the tip of the Seward peninsula) they might have looked across the restless Bering Strait to their hoped-for destination. But that was still four hundred miles away. They all felt a sudden strong impulse to call after the pilot and beg him to come back. They mastered the impulse. He had been a case-hardened, grim-visaged loner in a battered leather jacket and needing a shave. There had been no small talk during the two-hour flight that put them down outside Ruby at three o'clock in the morning. The pilot hadn't even mentioned where the all-night café was.

Near the Arctic Circle in early June three A.M. is not dark but it's still early. What to do until places opened? if there *was* any place to open and if it ever did. The weathered shacks of what looked like an Indian trading post were very much shut up. Nothing stirred; just the mosquitoes. They stirred enough

to make up for whatever motion might otherwise be lacking. They made the woodmen move too: anywhere to get away from them. But where? The road from the landing strip stretched wide between off-lying sod-roofed shanties but it seemed to lead nowhere. They knew though that it must. This was the raw new road that dead-ended seventy miles farther on at Koyukuk. In a fairer world of the future it was the intention that you should be able to ride this road in comfort to Nome, but that time was yet far off.

Around a bend past a low earth bank things brightened up. A gas station! and lit, to boot. Well, it stood to reason. The construction crews hadn't dropped dead because war had come. Quite the contrary. Work on the road project was being rushed forward and here were the visible signs of it. A dozen dump trucks, earthmovers, and long-haul flatbeds revved their motors in the early dawn and cab radios made the half-light hideous, and cheerful, with their screech. The woodmen hurried forward.

The interior of the service-station-cum-cafeteria-and-general-store was garish with unshaded fluorescent light. The blare of the truck radios was, however, a little muted here. The woodmen turned out their pockets and produced enough small change to embolden them to approach the counter. A squat broad-faced Indian woman beamed at them, displaying gold teeth. She said, "What'll it be, boys?"

"Oh—er, coffee," said spokesman Sawyer.

When that had been amiably provided the spokesman leaned forward on one elbow and asked confidentially: "Any chance of a lift on west from here? I mean, these truckers: think any of them might have room in back?" His heart both fluttered and sank.

"Ask 'em," urged the woman as good-naturedly as ever.

That was it. That was what Forrest had been faintly dreading since they'd spotted the trucks. Hitch-hiking was okay; in fact, nothing better. Nor, once you had a lift, was there any end to the cordiality and helpfulness you as hitch-hiker were

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willing to show. Even standing by the road and throwing up your thumb, hundreds of times in vain, was all right. That was impersonal as it were, anonymous. A refusal there didn't count. But to go up to somebody and *ask* for a ride, and get turned down; that was hateful. Forrest Sawyer couldn't stand rejections. Never had been able. A rejection like that you could remember for years. Silly.

Skog Vedhuggar and Woody Hackett weren't so thin-skinned. They harkened to their chief's nudge and went and propositioned all the drivers slumped over café tables, drifting among the canned goods, or jiggling by the juke-box. Then they went outside and asked all the men who were at their machines.

The answer was unanimous; "No room." That is; several of the truckers good-naturedly allowed as how they could squeeze in one or two. But ten?! No dice.

Even the "one-or-twos" were considered by the luckless woodmen. But it had been confirmed at the other end of the Pacific that splitting up was fatal. All-decisive was the consideration; what if six or eight got on, by "one or two", to the Koyukuk, but not the rest? No, they'd stay together or bust.

They looked to see if there was anything left after the payment for coffee. When they showed a credit card the woman just grinned. No, it was hours yet before they could buy anything with a credit card in benighted Ruby — if they ever could at all. With the final coins they bought a sack of lithe red last year's apples (eighteen of them) the cheapest edible thing in the store. Then they shouldered their packs and went back out on the tundra.

It was broad daylight now though four o'clock in the morning. Some people think mosquitoes are a dark-hours phenomenon. Arctic mosquitoes never heard of that. The race are perhaps more fiendishly industrious by day even than by dark. Outside the flapping swing door of the gas station emporium they descended in their millions.

Some of the men even uttered little squawks of distress. Though it was by no means cold during the light June nights in

central Alaska, the woodmen were bundled up in caps, scarves, and gloves dictated by the knowledgeable outfitter in Juneau. But faces remained undeniably bare and onto each settled a body-to-body mask of the whining stinging insects. It was fierce.

The men stumbled to the road edge and dropped their packs to scuffle inside. They couldn't just remember who had the two or three "mosquito pipes" they'd been cautioned to buy in Juneau. Earlier they hadn't so much appreciated their use but now it was as if life depended on them.

Coupeur du Bois found his first and began to blow on the drinking-straw-thin metal tube. He must have blown too hard. There was no visible effect on the mad-making mosquitoes who continued to cluster blackly on every face. But then Legno and Arbol found theirs and among them somebody must have hit the right note because instantly, like magic, every fiendish Insect went far, far away.

What blessed relief.

Apparently the hole-pierced whistles, when keyed just right, emitted a note, inaudible to coarse human ears, that homed in on the infinitesimal ones of mosquitoes and drove them up the wall. They'd fly miles to escape the agony to their eardrums.

Piping, the woodmen set off along the highway. In their lumber jackets and corduroy pants they also looked pretty "pied" as well.

The 'heart of :downtown Ruby', as they liked to think of it, was spread out over the rise to the left. The new broad road looped along below it. Until shop-opening hours, when they'd try if credit cards could avail anything at banks, bus depots, or boat-hiring agencies, the woodmen thought they'd stay on the road. Hitch-hiking was obviously hopeless but they couldn't sit still for four hours! not amongst these mosquitoes. On the road they could enjoy the vista of the mile-wide Yukon and the even broader expanse of green tundra vegetation that sloped steeply up the range of hills beyond it.

As they hiked along in the dawn solitude they had at least as unsullied a prospect of nature as the earth any longer afforded.

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Unless it be Antarctica or the farthest north reaches of Canada, there were no land areas on the planet any more sparsely populated than the north of Alaska, which began on the other side of the river at their feet. Ground-hugging wildflowers: mountain anemones, buttercups, and ground-sallows made yellow and pink splotches on every hand. Caribou and goats could be seen calmly grazing on the heights. And what was this?: a leggy juvenile moose suddenly appeared from nowhere, loping out of a stretch of muskeg off to the south.

The ten woodmen stopped, the blowing on three soundless flutes stopped - and the moose stopped. Then the mosquitoes started, and everything else restarted immediately as well. The Ozites would have liked to accord respectful awe to the big denizen of the wild so fortuitously appearing but it was impossible. The bugs made them jig in desperation and the pipes were blown furiously.

The moose itself was not undisturbed by the insect plague, but it was something else that primarily moved the animal. It did not stand on ceremony or wait to be politely admired but hurried on in a gangling lollop away from the brushwood and along the road, straight toward the wondering woodmen.

It should be mentioned that when the three pipers blew carelessly they were capable of producing from the six-holed pipes also sounds that they themselves could hear.

The notes, when long continued, were agonizing to their ears but they were, undeniably, musical tones. A sort of three-noted tune could be heard. The other three holes blew notes too high for human hearing.

But that was what the moose seemed drawn by. It came up to within two moose paces of the ten marveling men and then stood wagging its head and lifting its knees, one or two at a time.

It was dancing.

“Good heavens!” cried Bûcheron Arbrisseau, “a musical moose.”

C H A P T E R F O R T Y - F I V E

What in the world was Kaggi-Karr the crow doing all this while? the reader may well have asked himself. And where was her sidekick, the round robin?

Actually, they were along for part of the time—on both the big ex-Oz ventures! But let us tell their tale as a connected whole.

K.K. was much gratified at the electrifying effect of her news at the Mount Vernon West. She perched above the chamber door —not on a bust of Pallas exactly but on a cable-T.V. aerial installed there. From that vantage point she directed the woodmen's packing.

As has been noted, it is one of the true magical mysteries of Faerie that everybody can understand everybody in fairy lands. That includes animals, and often plants! and a good deal else. But also, as is well-documented, when normally non-talking creatures come away into the great world they no longer have speech, *except* to other creatures from the fairyland. Hence, the ten woodmen had been able to go on conversing with their buttonholes - but Dorothy couldn't. It was the same with Kaggi-Karr. The Oz men could catch every syllable she uttered but to originally outer-worlder Dorothy in Suite A it was all just raucous bird caws.

She felt out of it, and was soon to feel much outer, when the

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crow insisted the Kansas girl not come along on the proposed rescue operation. But triumphant Kaggi-Karr was soon to know the pangs of exclusionary treatment herself. For the nonce she bossed enjoyably (just as Dorothy enjoyed doing) the scurrying woodmen. "That's right: all your magic gear in that satchel. That's vital, both for the journey there and afterwards... No, don't bother with skis and snowshoes. Alaska's not the North Pole! The summers, at least, are quite equable... Now we'll need a sizeable bird-cage. I don't want to be cramped. What?!! no bird-cage? Well send down to the lobby shops for one... Oh, never mind, we'll stop at a pet shop on the way to the airport..." And so on.

Kaggi was gratified by the speed of the airplane. That was as fast as she could do herself! But she felt sadly frustrated when the men reported to her in her cage on a chair in the Juneau Visitor Center that they contemplated taking a pokey old train. "Oh, lud," she griped. "I wish they'd *kept* the line closed. Still, I suppose the bus or a coastal steamer wouldn't be much faster." She too attempted to take Forrest S's advice and leave off fidgeting and enjoy such of the scenery as could be made out through the veils of haze.

But what was this? At Lake Bennett, British Columbia, the train changed crews. Canadians replaced Americans for the run on to Whitehorse. The passengers got off for lunch, and everybody was requested to walk past the little customs house. That was just a formality. Only not this time.

"Excuse me, sir," said a polite man dressed more or less like a Royal Mountie. "Birds there, have you?"

Tajar Madera, carrying the cage, gave a start. "Er, yes. These are our faithful feathered friends. They go everywhere with us - and they love trains!" he lied fluently:

The official had seen their American passports and said, "Oh, it's quite all right as to entering Canada. But I take it you're going on into Alaska? The birds won't be allowed back across the border there."

Oh, murder. Who could have imagined this?

Our heroes and heroine had to withdraw to a bench on the

station approaches and confer. Kaggi-Karr scoffed. "Hah! what do I care for your borders? I cannot be frightened by them. Hasn't that fellow ever noticed birds have wings? Open the door, Tajar, please. We can fly across any border, and we don't need passports, thank you!"

But after her little show of defiance K.K. had to come down off her high horse. Anyway it was too pokey for words having to squat in a cage while the train wound its slow way and later a bus would do the same, scarcely faster. Wouldn't the Alaskan officials at the other end be suspicious about the woodmen's empty bird-cage? Also, Kaggi and the robin couldn't fly around loose in the bus after the border. The whole situation was too picayune and vexing.

"No!" announced the crow. "Here's what we'll do." She longed to be out in the great free spaces anyway and she recalled nostalgically their noble flight to Seattle when fates of nations hung on her wings - and those of her companion. "We'll do a liaison with the dragon voyagers on Diomedes, or wherever they've taken them, then rendezvous with you at Fairbanks. We'll be there before you are! "

So she reasoned. But it didn't work out that way. Maybe Kaggi sensed something of what might happen, for she said to Forrest S.; "Got your magic bits handy? I noticed you had invisibility pills there. Swallow one, R.R. I'll do the same. Never know what prison cells we may want to enter, sight unseen. And don't bother about looking for us at Fairbanks," she laughed; "we'll find *you*." To make the job easier, however, they agreed on "in front of the post office at high noon" X days thence. Then they flew away invisibly.

The fine summer weather didn't play the birds false. They made good time. And what did they care for mosquitoes? They swallowed them with gusto and flew on. Neither did hostilities, sporadic as they looked and sounded, bother them on the Seward peninsula. They merely didn't find any traces of their erstwhile traveling companions on Diomedes. There they lost, perforce, valuable time while Kaggi-Karr hung around groups of the

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military until at last she overheard a tip about the fate and destination of the “enemy” captives.

Once again great issues hung on the wings of a little black bird from an imaginary country. Well, on those of the tractable Round Robin too—but let’s face it: his role, important to our heroine though it was, was chiefly that of confidant and company to the masterful crow. He didn’t even have any interpreter duties to perform as they flew over Alaska. It was only when they would reach Soviet territory that it was going to be useful if somebody could understand the local lingo for eavesdropping purposes. Once when the invisible pair landed amidst a group of locals outside a leather tent and tried to overhear, the people turned out to be talking Tlingit (though the birds weren’t to know that) and R.R. proved useless as an interpreter.

In the same way they tried to pick up the odd bit of useful information from animals but when they landed on the budding antlers of a juvenile moose whom they found waltzing about in the muskeg and they spoke to him in Animese, the poor beast was terrified at voices from invisible sources and tore away across the tundra without vouchsafing a single sensible word.

Luck of a sort was with the birds. They caught up with the Ozite captives of the Soviets just as they were boarding the plane for Moscow. There, in a puff of smoke, went the date in Fairbanks! It was too vital to the birds to find out what the fate of their comrades from Oyhho II was going to be.

Naturally the birds never let out a peep during the flight. They managed to pick up some crumbs of those pirozhki though. When their friends were shown to their cells in the cellars of the Kremlin, the two just followed along silently and invisibly. But you can be sure there was a joyous reunion as soon as K.K. and R.R. found themselves alone in a cell with Henk and Professor Wogglebug.

“I wish we could reverse our invisibility, docent,” said Kaggi-Karr presently, when the first fine fervor of their expressions of gladness died down, “but you say you salvaged nothing of your magic from the crash?” Well, there are our return-to-Oz charms;

thank goodness we've all still got those! But I guess you'll just have to make do talking to empty space for the nonce. Other than that, though, the invisibility's been invaluable."

Thus the two birds were present at the famous 'trial' scene. They too gasped rather when Henkomankatogale made a monkey out of the Top Commissar. But the clever little crow kept her wits about her. Shielded by her invisibility she was in no rush to wish on her claw ring and invoke her neck talisman as did the Round Robin and the rest. So it was that, to her amazement, she saw her countryman from Other-Oz, bearded Lestar, remain near the Chairman as the latter resumed his place and turned to see - his captives vanish.

That brought on, a few moments postponed, the baffled rage that everyone had expected the instant the Chairman came to himself and realized he'd been turned into a figure of fun by the ringleader of the enemy aliens. He grew red in the head and personally laid hand on good Lestar to detain him.

"Oh, I wasn't going anywhere, Mr. Chairman," spoke Lestar mildly. "I thought I should stop behind and add my apologies to those of my leader, Commander Henkomankatogale, for any inconvenience or indignity you feel you have suffered. It was really very naughty of my friend." Lestar aimed to make light of the whole affair, though not to the point of claiming the joke had been a good one.

"Never mind that!" said the chairman. "I'll survive. No doubt I never should have let myself get into a position where it could happen—"

"You were always in the position," corrected Lestar still as mildly.

"What?!" near-roared the chairman and his jaw came near dropping.

"One or another of us could have turned you at any time into a page of the late Czar's diary or - oh, two kopecks' worth of pepper on a market stall in Kiev. Oz magic is powerful."

The Chairman sat down in utter flabbergastation. He'd *seen* the magic working. He had no reason to doubt Lestar's

statements.

In a moment he collected himself sufficiently to look about to where the other members of the Presidium were standing around not knowing whether to flit or go blind. He made a dismissive gesture of the hand. Then, when his brother officials still hesitated to leave him alone in the company of the dangerous unarmed five-foot-tall enemy alien he barked, "Get lost!" They did.

"Tell me more," he said and indicated that Lestar should sit down at one of the spectator desks vacated by the commissars. "Most of all; tell me why your confederates disappeared. That's what angers me. I had use for them here!"

"It was all agreed in advance," related Lestar. "Great magicians as they all are, it was never their intention to remain in captivity a moment longer than it pleased them."

"Why did it please them to stay this long?"

Now at last Lestar could explain to somebody who cared about listening the whole genesis and purpose of the flight of the dragon dirigible.

"We came to the outer world to prove the efficacy and beneficent power of magic. Only, we were intending to show it to the western world, not the eastern."

"Does it matter?" said the Chairman. "You were you say, planning to do good to the *whole* world, not just part. Your friends succeeded brilliantly. All of us who saw are now believers. So why did they leave?"

"Because they were prisoners. In Oz—and elsewhere—it only pleases us to make our contribution if we are free."

C H A P T E R F O R T Y - S I X

The Musical Moose (he'd already graduated to capital letters in the minds of the delighted ten woodmen, a thing they themselves hadn't even yet done, though perhaps it was about time) just wouldn't quit. Besides liking the inaudible tune of the mosquito pipes he also found irresistible the eighteen apples in the woodmen's sack. He could smell them from a distance, you see. He nosed around until he found them and then ate them every one, leaving none for dessert or the woodmen.

"Oh, now, this is really too bad, " said Spokesman Forrest, though with a twinkle. "They were to have tided us over till we got to Galena, at least. We must turn back. We can't go on, out into the wilds, without emergency rations." He turned and started walking toward Ruby. It was eight o'clock by now. Things might start to be open.

The moose followed. The woodmen would have tried to shoo him away but he was too popular. They all loved the gangling creature practically on sight. Perhaps he reminded them of Oz, where animals were not afraid of men and shoved themselves in everywhere.

It was nine o'clock by the time they climbed the rise into the bustling settlement. Moom was right with them as they discovered a little post office and beside it a tiny bank. "Musical Moose"

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had already been shortened in the speech of the woodmen to "Moom". (He was not to be confused with 'Moomin' which he was nothing like.)

While the others kept Moom from being run over by the six-bys that thrummed through the few and dusty streets of Ruby, Forrest went in and flashed his credit card and passport to the youthful Indian clerk and got some folding money. "How do people get around here anyway?" said Sawyer, "now that air travel's cut out. My friends and I are trying to get to Nome but we're stranded."

"You must be real new around here," said the boy. "Haven't you been down to the river?"

"River?" Forrest reflected. "We saw it in the distance. Yeah, it did look a little busy. What's the story?"

"The government commandeered all private water craft. They're running everything from rowboats to yachts as ferries - and for free!"

"Well!" said the Ozite and grinned in relief. "We figured they'd have to do something but we hadn't heard a word. We know from experience everything goes on by air but with that traffic grounded—and no road beyond Koyukuk—" The woodmen's representative had done enough reading up on the bus to sound like an old sourdough now!

"Go down to the new bridge works," directed the amiable youth. "Anything you see moving on the water's fair game. For a little something extra you can probably sit at the captain's table."

As a matter of fact one of the vessels moored at or near the unfinished-bridge end *was* a ferry but it wasn't just going tamely across to the other side of the heretofore unbridged Yukon but downstream. Admittedly they had to wait five hours for its scheduled departure but then they were assured of transpo as far down the river as the southern bend at the delta, if they cared to go that far.

That left the woodmen time to lay in provisions - and get rid of Moom. He was a darling, of course, but they didn't see how

their rescue operation was going to be expedited by the addition of a moose. They walked out of town again and sat on a bank of earth where they looked out on the Yukon and the confluent Melozitna River and there they had a feast of their store-bought delicacies. There was no paté d'Alsace, of course, nor yet Dolcelatte, but the sourdough bread, boloney, Wisconsin cheddar, and kosher dills tasted good enough. There was even a quarter bushel of oats for Moom.

The insidious moose tried to seduce them with Terpsichorean wiles. It came about in this way; Legno Tagliabosco, who was carrying the bag of magic tricks in his backpack, set it from him rather brusquely to scabble for his mosquito pipe. The insects clustered especially terribly when the men settled on the bank to make their sandwiches.

In his gropings within the rucksack Legno must have hit the catch that activated the pocket orchestra. Suddenly, deafeningly, the great symphonic theme of "Stella by Starlight" boomed out across the tundra. Moom gulped down his current mawful of oats and went into his dance. Violently he jiggled up and down and out into the middle of the road, causing heavy lorries to swerve and drivers to curse. Some of them stopped and gaped, even offered pleasantries to the ten eating woodmen all in a row, suggesting that if they were a circus then indeed Moom was their star turn.

Legno turned off the orchestra when eventually they headed back to town. Otherwise it would have gone on playing "Stella", inventing new variations on the theme, until it *was* starlight. Even without music Moom followed patiently and persistently after.

At the riverside people were queueing up to go aboard the great raft-like ferry launch. Our friends mingled with the crowd, looking as if a moose were no different from any other item of cattle. There were sheep among the prospective passengers as well. Yet when it came to basics the ferrymaster drew the line at meese.

Oh, dear, crisis. What to do now? Actually, more than one of the woodmen thought their rescue expedition was well charac-

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terized by the addition of an adolescent moose. The quest was in that degree whimsical and hopeless that they might well, for all practical purposes, step back from the ferry and let it go.

And yet! it wasn't so much whether they could in fact do anything effective about saving their compatriots from the Soviets. They were country woodsmen from a land, albeit powerful in magic, that was naive about methods and conditions in the "great world". The point was that they must be seen to be doing, however quixotically, their duty, a duty they had never volunteered for but been politely pressured into. They were sturdy men and true. They would do what was expected of them yet a while. Nor were they imaginative enough to think of any other way they could forward their cause than by plugging onward. They must go with the ferry. In five minutes it would shove off.

They looked at the moose beside them, ready to go aboard, looking forward to the next lark, wondering what the hang-up was. His big eyes looked questioningly from one to another. They thought what the look would be if they could tell him, in words that he could grasp, that the party, the fun times were going on without him. He would be left behind.

No, that stricken look they couldn't face. A sudden thought took Arbol Cortador. He twisted something on his left hand, yanked something from his neck and pressed it against Moom's drooping muzzle. "Go to Oz!" he said, and added one more whispered word.

The Musical Moose left the muskeg and the tundra forever.

C H A P T E R F O R T Y - S E V E N

It stands to reason, doesn't it? How else was Moom going to have all the adventures described in *The Musical Moose in Oz* unless he went there? But at first Princess Ozma couldn't understand why there should be a moose in her bedroom.

Once again she reminded herself of the old queen of England. However, instead of being routinely indignant she tried to get some insight into the social and psychological stimuli that could drive the animal to invade her privacy.

"Do sit down if you care to," she invited, plumping up the pillows behind her and getting comfortable herself.

The moose burped something unintelligible, then said, "I don't know if I can," in a voice that wobbled disconcertingly between bass and treble. "Hey! Listen to that! I'm talking!"

"Yes, you may also do that if you like," conceded the Princess graciously.

"I don't think I can do that either," protested Moom. "I've never talked or sat down in my life."

"But you're very young, aren't you? These things will come to you," reassured Ozma. "There's no getting away from it when you're Irish." She wasn't quite sure why she said that, but she *had* just watched *Gone With the Wind* that evening on Home Box Office.

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"I'm not Irish," declared the moose forthrightly. "I'm Alaskan."

That made Ozma sit up straight in bed and no mistake. "Alaska?! Oh, tell me quickly, did you see ten rather gormless-looking men and a couple of little birds: a black one and a fat round one with a red breast?"

"How funny that you should ask that," said Moom, splaying his long legs out like tent-poles and getting comfortable himself near the bed end. "My dearest friends are ten gormless-looking men. I was just with them a moment ago. I can't think where they've got to—or how I got to where I've got to. As for the birds, I don't think I know them."

"I think I understand," said the fairy, who by now was good at deducing in what fashion totally unexpected visitors would suddenly appear in her presence. "Do you happen to remember if one of the men said 'Pryzxlgl'? just before you lost sight of them."

"Why, I believe one of them did murmur something to that effect. Why do you ask?"

Ozma explained. "Now don't be frightened but those men, those friends of yours, are magicians of a sort and I believe they sent you to me. This is a magical land, you see, and we can do things like that from time to time. What was their message?"

"Message?"

"Yes, didn't they tell you something you were to tell me?"

"No-o. That was the last thing anyone was thinking of. We were getting on a big raft and were going to make a trip on the great water, I think..."

"What great water is that?" asked Ozma, already herself at sea.

"Why, just the Great Water. That's what we always called it, home on the range."

"And you didn't—I think I gather—follow what the men said to each other?"

The moose blushed. "I've led a sheltered life. I never met any of the stand-up animals before today. But they were so

nice..."

"I quite understand... Yes, I think I see.. Well, Master Moose, make yourself comfortable until morning. Have a lie-down if you like. Here's a pillow; I don't know if you care for such things." She tossed it into a corner of the room. "No, don't eat it. It's for laying your head on. Here, wait a minute." Ozma fumbled in her bedside table and fished out her overnight wand. "Whlipps! Frlipps!" A heap of crushed oats, green hay, and dried apple rings appeared beside the flung pillow. "In case you want a snack in the night... Pleasant dreams."

In fact, Princess Ozma was relieved that no one other than a moose arrived in her bedroom that night. The plague of unexpected immigrants to Oz had burst all bounds and the country was drowning in them. No one had yet quite figured out how they got there but the overland refugees were clustering in an ever-widening band all around the perimeters of the country (except on the deadliest side). Deputations of public-spirited citizens were out and about twenty-four hours a day distributing emergency rations among them. Meanwhile the by now literally thousands of people who had dropped in on Wizard Wam occupied a tent city on the Munchkin-Gillikin border that was already the second largest community in Oz. Now in the last few days interlopers had been turning up by the dozens in the presence of Queen Ozma herself. At least it was a bit of a change to get a moose.

The next day Ozma and her advisers questioned Moom in depth but learned no more about their questing friends the woodmen than that they were all still able-bodied enough to eat sandwiches by the roadside and to walk down to a river. Afterwards the newcomer was sent to join the Sawhorse and the Woozy for company in the stables.

For four days nothing happened that was new in kind. Queen Glinda had arrived for yet another crisis conference with Ozma and her staff, when the nine escapees (plus the round robin) arrived from Moscow. "Thank Oz!!" cried the southern sorceress fervently. She shook hands almost violently with Commander

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Henkomankatogale (who had Dr. Dorothy around his neck) and said, "At last! we can get on with encasing Oz in fibre-glass. Would right now be too soon to begin, Docent?"

Henk released himself from his mum's embrace and welcomed Glinda's proposal. It was good to be back in a position to do something effective for his native land. The shame of having been an ineffectual prisoner in the cellars of the Kremlin still clung about the young man, nor was the memory pleasing to him of having so far given way to paltry spite as to turn the Chairman of the Communist Party into an ape. He wanted to get busy with a job of work and exorcise the past.

Glinda and the docent were on the point of rushing off to the Throne Room (which was located at the precise geographical center of Oz, from which the endowment must take place) when Ozma intervened. "Would that not be a little premature, my friends?" she enquired, with a grave twinkle in her eyes.

The Oz-savers bridled.

"Had you not noticed that a couple of your party are missing?" asked the Queen.. In truth: it was only a moment since the refugees from Oyhho II had performed their magic return to Oz and they had not yet counted heads. "Good heavens!" cried Dr. Em. Wogglebug. "Where's engineer Lestar?!"

"And Kaggi-Karr!" whistled the Round Robin in consternation.

"Oh... oh-h!" groaned Henk in sudden agony of conscience. "I thought I got them all out—but oh! I didn't. If ever the manly youth were near to tears it was now.

"Don't worry darling," shushed his loving mother.

"They've got their charms. They *can* always get back, whenever they want."

Nevertheless there was an agonized hour or three of uncertainty before the two truants finally turned up. By then Ozma had reason to be glad the conference had gravitated to the capacious Throne Room.

C H A P T E R F O R T Y - E I G H T

The testy Chairman was offended. He had no objection to holding prisoners. The cellars of the Kremlin as well as the salt mines of Siberia were full of them. But he did take umbrage when anyone he was talking to *referred* to that person's own incarcerated state. It was a lapse from good form, he felt. He thought he would punish Lestar for bringing up the distasteful topic by having him put in irons. It was reminiscent of Hitler, who required of his staff that they never tell him what they had done with the Jewish children, because it made him cry.

The great Soviet was more realistic than that however. He remembered that Lestar in handcuffs might find it hard to manipulate the magic implements, which it was the Chairman's firm intention to find out the workings of. Therefore he restrained his temper and said equably, "Since you're bringing the gift of magic to the *whole* world, may not I too be a sharer? Please show me how the—er, toys work."

But of course Lestar wasn't about to do that. His (and his compatriots') mission had been only to prove to the outer world that magic was real. Later on they could reach an agreement on just which forms of magic would be supplied to make industry and modern civilization in general smokeless and gasless and so put a stop to at least aerial pollution. It was nobody's plan

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that the instruments aboard the dragon dirigible be delivered over for indiscriminate use and mischief-making by un-magic-indoctrinated other-worldlings.

At that point Kaggi-Karr, until now unseen and unheard, got into the act. On her depended, though nobody could guess it, the final triumph of magic in the world - and its immediately subsequent crashing defeat!

She was perched on little Lestar's shoulder and of course he knew it. When she heard the Alter-Ozite say that he would sooner sicken and die than reveal the secrets of Oz magic, she croaked into his ear, in what passed with her as a whisper; "Are you crazy? *Tell* him how they work! It can't do any harm. As he says, they're really only toys; a bit of flashing colored lights and programmed hallucinations. There's nothing they can use as weaponry. And think of

the publicity!; when they find out at the U.N. that the top Communist believes in magic - and uses it! Why the world will beat a path to our door! ."

"They have already. I think that's one of the things Princess Ozma is afraid of," Lestar whispered back.

"Are you rehearsing spells, Mr. Lestar?" asked the chairman. "And what is that croaking noise I hear?"

"That's my familiar, your honor," replied polite Lestar. "I never do any magic without my loving crow beside me. She's invisible, of course."

"Ah, splendid," The Chairman rubbed his hands in satisfaction. "So you are going to demonstrate a little magic?"

"My familiar recommends it," conceded Lestar.

So the Chairman was shown all the procedures and he took notes furiously. Of course the false, fleeting - but by no means unclever - creature at once figured out how to use the gadgetry, if not as weapons, at least to throw consternation into the ranks of his adversaries. The very next day a Soviet government jet, suitably disguised as Yugoslav, landed at Jakdools Airport and surprised the ground crew by appearing to be empty except for the pilots. In fact it was crowded with Russian spies who had

swallowed invisibility pills and now made their way to the Pentagon, where they had a glorious time.

Lestar and Kaggi-Karr were not to know that, however. They were conducted with all due ceremony back to Lestar's cell. No doubt the Chairman realized what he would probably do now but it didn't matter; he had had his use of the Ozite.

When the little artisan joined the prison chow line an hour later and saw the downcast faces of all the people who had dared to criticize the regime, he passed the whispered word along; "Join hands and hold on for dear life!" Then he twisted his wishing ring, looped his arm through the belt of the man nearest him, grasped his neck charm with the other hand, said that certain word, and dropped down in the Throne Room of the Palace of Magic—along with forty-two anonymous Russkis. Kaggi-Karr followed a moment later.

C H A P T E R F O R T Y - N I N E

The ferry went so slowly (and stopped so often) that the ten woodmen almost thought it really was the big drifting raft it much resembled. In fact, it was equipped with twin dynamos that kept it chugging along at a steady rate. It stopped at night. Nobody out in the West, except the woodmen, was in that big a hurry. The passengers would get off and make their way up the bank to log cabin lodges run by Eskimos. The woodmen shrugged and followed along. They tried to heed their own advice: 'When you can't speed it, enjoy it.'

By day, standing at the ferry rail, they stared out across the broad, still cleanish water to the mountains on one side and the river flats on the other. For the moment (which was lasting a few thousand years) the Yukon seemed to be carrying on a love affair with the western range of hills that ran south from the Arctic Circle three hundred miles to the river's vast double delta. It clung close about the base of the foothills as if trying to shelter under their skirts—all the way to the sea. Or perhaps the river's aims were more predatory. It was going to chew away and consume the highlands and leave them a flat wet plain such as it had created to the east and south all the way from Ruby to the ocean.

Sometimes the woodmen caught glimpses of the wild life

that abounded in the vast and (even in this age) un-built-over region. There were rare sightings of muskrat and beaver, if you had field glasses, and the woodmen did. Sometimes far away an Indian file of wolves could be seen. By now the sight of caribou and moose was beginning to be familiar to the Ozites and when that happened they thought of Moom and wondered what kind of a figure he was cutting in the court of Ozma of Oz. But most to be seen were the water birds that literally filled both sky and river. Far from the mass of mankind, and in the relatively clear air that made the sun look only vermilion, not deep scarlet, the bird life burgeoned. No wonder. Forrest, from his study of the guide book, could tell his friends that the great delta they were coming to was one of the largest waterfowl breeding grounds in the world.

“How come exactly?” said Waldo Baumschneider, who tended to be a thought more thoughtful than most of his fellows. “How come there’s all this waste ground up here? I read that something called the ‘greenhouse effect’ is supposed to be giving the Frigid Zone almost a temperate climate by now. With the population burst you’d think people would have covered all this region with buildings by now—and put an end to much waterfowl breeding.”

That was something Forrest’s reading had informed him about - and he could also think for himself. “Hah!” he scoffed. “That green house effect! How much of that effect do you get when the greenhouse has a tin roof over it and at each end a high-powered refrigerator installation with all the doors open? That’s what kind of a greenhouse the earth is now.

“Why the very books that tell you that increasing air pollution dooms the earth to a continuous warming-up effect—despite each present-day winter being longer and colder than the one before - usually also contain a chapter describing how every major series of volcano eruptions in the past, which filled the air with extra dust and gas pollution, resulted in extra-long and severe winters in the years immediately following. Those experts don’t seem able to grasp the logic of their own state-

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ments.

“Anyway, forget about the greenhouse effect. With snow lying thick nine months of the year, most of Alaska isn’t going to get built over all that quick.”

At the southernmost bend of the broad Yukon all the remaining passengers got off, to board the waiting busses and trucks for the trip to Bethel or the many Eskimo villages in the delta. The woodmen were left low and dry. As they looked out on the empty, vast, and wandering air to west and wondered how they were ever to cross land and sea to Nome, they may well have quailed, and looked back on the lazy days aboard the Yukon Queen as to a halcyon.

Magic, however, came to their rescue. Now it may seem strange to some readers that the woodmen, possessed as they were of a sack of assorted periapts brought from Oz specially by Monique Mulroony, made no use of magic to forward their toilsome cause in Alaska. Kaggi-Karr had been the only one with imagination enough even to make use of disappearing pills for the purposes of the round robin and herself. Even the ring/pendant combination used to wish Moom to Oz was not something from the emerald box but a device that the men had got used to bearing in mind as their ultimate resource just in case things got *too* sticky.

However, aboard the ferry, times when time hung heavy for all the passengers and Forrest Sawyer pondered how he might beguile that time, he happened to think of the magic tricks they possessed. Of course the first time after Montana that he was on his own (with just his nine pals around) and unobserved by strangers Sawyer had tried out the contents of the, by then departed, box of spells. He’d looked at the pocket orchestra, but quickly looked away. They all of them remembered how *that* worked!

He twirled the knurled wheel on something like a cigarette lighter. Suddenly the air in Suite A was charged with the heady fragrance of Evening in St. Louis. The fellows all looked puzzled. Forrest spun the knurl again. A delicious odor of actively oper-

ating brewery filled the room. The men caught on. Again a twirl and a haunting scent of fresh roasting coffee. And again: the glamorous aroma of night-blooming jasmine on a tropical isle was smelt. By then they all understood the genius of that toy.

Tajar pulled an ordinary-looking clay pipe from his pocket. "Try that," he said. Forrest read the directions: 'Dip in hair spray and blow'. Well, none of the boys used hair spray, or, indeed, had ever heard of it. They rang room service though and before very long an economy-size bottle was delivered at the door. They dumped it in the bathroom basin and dipped the pipe.

Oh, now that was fun! though maybe it was scarcely "magic". When you puffed into the wetted pipe a big *opaque* bubble gradually formed which, when it got big enough for its interior air to out-unweigh the semi-permanent skin of the air-globe, detached itself from the pipe and drifted to the ceiling where it bobbed about like a toy balloon. The magic seemed to be that the babbles didn't pop and that the rainbow iridescence of them, though lovely, was not transparent. You didn't get those effects using real-life bubble pipes.

Now, sitting on a capstan aboard the Yukon Queen, the woodmen's chief shed a nostalgic tear for the pocket orchestra. It was to have delighted President Koxden at the mayor's home in Seattle and caused him to call off Star Wars and initiate Operation Oz. Now it was useless. Forrest still couldn't think of any way to advance the rescue of his countrymen in Communist captivity by displaying again the infinite riches of that little room. Still, a little music couldn't hurt. He flicked the On switch.

The effect on his fellow passengers was electric. They of course had all been listening on their own head-sets to brought-along tapes or to radio hillbilly. They turned; as one, affronted faces to Forrest Sawyer because he presumed to annoy them with a great symphonic theme. Quickly he shut off the pocket orchestra.

But general attention had been directed, if very fleetingly, to the woodmen. Otherwise nobody had given them a second glance, supposing them to be a mere party of hunters from Ohio

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caught on their sportsmen's holiday by the outbreak of war and now presumably trying, rather feebly, to get back home.

Now, as the men stood on the dock and looked bewildered, two of the Eskimo youths whose musical enjoyment had been disturbed, came up to them, lifted the butts from their lips, and said, "Where you tryin' to get to?" Their faces were expressionless.

"Oh, er—well—across to Nome actually. We're prospectors—just for fun, that is."

"There's a war on. Ain't ya heard?"

"Oh, yeah, we sure did. But we couldn't just drop dead. We thought we'd try to get on to our destination - and then see what happened."

"Wanna travel in an oomiak?" Despite their unprepossessing expressions the youths seemed to intend to be helpful.

"Oomiak?"

"Yeah. Skin boat."

Now the young men were skinheads. That style was in recurrent fashion again. But "skin boats"? Then Sawyer remembered a reference in his guide book. "Oh, the traditional means of getting about on water of your people?" he quoted knowingly. The youths just looked perplexed.

The Ozite spokesman decided to try being more down-to-earth. "Big boats made out of seal skins?" he essayed.

"Yeh—or sea lion," said one.

"Yeah, or walrus," offered the other. "You mean sail with you in oomiaks to Nome?" queried Forrest, getting excited. "We can pay, of course."

"Yeh," vouchsafed the Eskimos.

Just like that it was decided. Some of the woodmen were of several minds about getting into the two big, sturdily constructed, but withal slight-looking (in comparison with the broad waters of the Yukon) craft moored at the riverbank fifty yards downstream. Still, they did it.

It might be tedious to continue the guided tour of Alaska, describing the woodmen's paddle journey of a night and two

days down the island-and-bird-filled river to the sea. It certainly would be painful to have to relate how the initially so less-than-appealing-looking locals lived up (as so often happens) to the first impression they made. The youths and their fathers, plus one extra individual of that generation, presumed to be an uncle, proved surly traveling companions. They kept to themselves, did not offer their passengers any of the reindeer jerky or cold sourdough pancakes they shared out among themselves, and pretended at times not even to understand English, although their transistors kept up a steady background commentary in West Virginian with musical accompaniment.

It was when they reached the mouth of the estuary that they turned nasty. Not to say that they pulled any intricately carved, bone-handled example of native craftwork on the guileless Ozites. If they'd been prone to use knives they also would not have minded forcing their victims overboard once out on the wide waters of Norton Sound.

No, they just wanted the money.

When the woodmen, after expressing the thought that, after such kindness, that was a dismal thing to do, declined to part with all the rest of their ready cash, the Eskimos got tough and took it from them.

What?! did ten sturdy lumberjacks funk it? and give up their all without a struggle? I'm afraid they did. At least: they didn't "funk" it. They were not cowards. They would gladly have laid down their lives for something important. But they were nice guys, and nice guys all too often are thoughtful guys as well. They think, 'Is it worth it to lose a few teeth and/or an eye or so for the sake of mere money/possessions?' With health (which they had) all objects can always be got again, but if you lose your health (partially anyway, in the form of departing eyes or teeth), plus, naturally, the objects which get taken away from you anyway, where are you?

Nowhere, realized the ten, and handed over.

Having succeeded so neatly, the natives went for more. They despoiled the luckless travellers of all their equipment. That

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meant the magic as well, though that particular theft ended by providing the woodmen with the last laugh. One of the younger of the 'waterwaymen' appeared to have remained impressed with the capabilities of the pocket orchestra—hence the latter part of the robbery took place to the tune of "Stella by Starlight".

On the north bank of the river, where the mighty Yukon flows into the Bering Sea and not far along the beach from the delightfully named hamlet of Kwikpak, the brigands put our 'heroes' ashore. The downcast decemvirate stood on the muddy sand and watched their f'alse benefactors push off in the oomiaks and disappear. Not the oomiaks. Just the Eskimos.

It seemed that the thieves had discovered amidst their loot the clear glass tube containing the invisibility pills. Being on whatever cheap drugs they could get access to, they were delighted with the find and, on the principle of 'Swallow it first; see what it s good for afterwards', the five gulped down the entire lot.

That sight—or absence of it—was enough for the woodmen. Splitting their sides with glee, they made off as fast as they could go along the sea beach northward. It just might be that the oomiakists, blaming their disappearance on their victims would put to shore again and pursue them, desiring them to undo the spell. It was bad enough being robbed by the miscreants thought the woodmen. they didn't want to have to wrestle with them as well, they being both incensed and invisible.

They needn't have worried: The Eskimos had no thought of such finesses as deactivating magic spells. Rather it would seem, from the sound of angry voices borne over the waters and of a resounding splash or two, that they had taken to wrestling, sight unseen, among themselves.

In time the oomiaks too disappeared but in a natural way, as they drifted away south and the ten Ozites hightailed it north. When at last they found themselves quite alone in the sub-Arctic vastness the men slowed down. Then they shuddered.

An aerial photograph made at this point would have shown the woodmen as infinitesimal specks on the wave-lapped shore

of a massive sweep of flat dark brown earth that curved round north to northeast: earth that was mud and gravel, deeply scored by seas and glaciers into an infinity of ponds and creeks that stretched in fan-like pattern as far as eye reached, all golden in the late afternoon sun. There was no tree, no blade of grass, not a thing that lived except the thousands of sea birds that flapped and dipped and squawked desolately.

It was the end of the world. Or if not, it would do very well until the real thing came along. As for signs of humanity, they were limited to the occasional squadron or single war-plane that streaked soundlessly across the far high sky north-westerly.

Oh, desolation.

And yet if they insisted on looking on the bright side, there were consolations. The little off-sea breeze kept the mosquitoes away. And it was going to be bright daylight all night long for their two-hundred-mile stroll along the shore of Norton bay to Nome.

Smiling hysterically, almost without speech, the castaways set off.

They had gone but a short way when the ten woodmen saw in the distance walking toward them a little girl. At least, she was wearing a poke bonnet and the broadly flounced, almost crinoline, but short skirts of a little girl, though in face and figure she was revealed as being of—oh, about the age of Judy Garland in the film of *The Wizard of Oz*.

It was Dr. Dorothy Gale Choggolak of Kansas and Oz, and in her company, perched on her shoulder, was a little black bird. Also along, hauled out of mothballs for the occasion, was a small black dog whom several of the woodmen recognized as Toto.

With screams of bliss the two parties ran forward toward each other and threw themselves into as many arms as they could manage.

Afterwards, sitting on the damp muddy sand, Dorothy told her story.

C H A P T E R F I F T Y

It all began—said Dorothy—when that charming mooseling arrived at the palace in the Emerald City. Moom was able to reassure us that everything was still all right with you men and that your quest was going on apace. For the time being everything was still uncertain: there had been no word from our friends from the dragon dirigible and the Magic Picture continued to show them as in custody but not in danger. There was even still a chance that your rescue operation, with a lot of luck! and, the plentiful use of magic, might succeed.

The aeronauts had, as you know, been captured by the Russians but what you could not know was that they'd been taken to Moscow. Still, we were sure that you'd have as much presence of mind as Kaggi-Karr here and make yourselves invisible and perhaps smuggle yourselves onto an airplane and get to the Russian capital just as she did. There was just the chance.

Some time later, however, that chance was proved vain. All the castaways from the dragon flight returned, by the use of their rings and pendants safe and sound to Ozma's court. Kaggi-Karr and Lestar came in a few hours later, with most startling news and also with forty-two Russians, who have chosen to make their home in Oz. It was all most exciting. Ozma appointed me to be in charge of a special housing committee to find places

where the new arrivals could stay. As a matter of fact, since then about half of them have gone back to Alternate Oz with artisan Lestar- it was thought they'd feel more at home there.

For me it was such a delight to be able to talk to Kaggi-Karr again. I'll admit I'd been cross with her for making me take my leave of you all at Seattle but still I had to admit it was for the best. I've been able to make myself quite useful to Ozma in the meantime, and what good, after all, could I have done, tagging along with you to Alaska? I'm sure you've enjoyed just being bachelors together, roughing it, telling racy stories, perhaps even picking up further lady friends. But no, I mustn't be catty...

At the same time dear Kaggi was most contrite and admitted that—though she's right most of the time!—she has made wrong decisions. Her latest one was perhaps the wrongest of all. May I tell tales out of school, dear Kaggi? Well, remembering, and very properly too, that Princess Ozma had sent all of us out into the great world for just one purpose; to convince that world that magic worked and to cause it to replace the fossil and atomic fuels in industry and transportation with magic power, the crew used her influence to persuade that same Master Lestar of the crew of Oyhho II to reveal to the Communist leaders in Moscow the functioning of those items of sorcery that had been aboard the dragon dirigible. What aid it matter? thought Kaggi. They were just toys, really, though spectacular in their effects.

Alas, the airship crew and sometime prisoners had been at home in Oz no longer than half a day when, in addition to the forty-two we already had, further dozens, scores, hundreds! of other Russians began to flood into the Emerald City!

Among the treasures whose secrets Lestar explained to the Chairman of the Communist Party had been an extra Return-to-Oz set. Lestar had been really uneasy about showing how that worked. Then Kaggi reminded him how, traditionally, the powers that be in the Soviet Union have always been opposed to letting anyone escape—I mean, emigrate—from Russia. Was there any reason to suppose they would reverse that policy in

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the case of so odd a destination as a land that was never in this world? The risk seemed minimal.

But woe! the guess was put to shame within five hours of the return of the last of the astronauts to Oz. As we've put together the story from the 'survivors', the Chairman was furious when he learned that Lestar had taken away forty-two imprisoned dissidents to Oz. Then, before half an hour had passed the Chairman—down in the Kremlin cellars where he'd gone to inspect the extent of the decampment—slapped his thigh and exclaimed; "Of course! What a good idea! What am I fuming about? They'd never make good Socialists anyway. And it's safer than killing them and cheaper than feeding them... Come here, you!", and he called to our informant, said "Pryzxl" (easy for Russians), and sent him to Oz! It would seem the Chairman was delighted with the efficacy of his ploy because within less than twenty-four hours upwards of a thousand Russians arrived in our capital city. Can you imagine! Ozma, in whose presence of course all the travelers by magic arrived, had to run to the ballroom. The smaller Throne Room just wouldn't hold them all. Naturally as soon as they appeared they were all sent off to be quartered elsewhere.

It had all along been intended that the moment all the Oz world-travelers had got back home the endowment of all Oz would be carried out. I had no sooner welcomed back my dear boy Henk than he put heads together with Sorceress Glinda and the two rushed off, respectively, to my alma mater, Oz U, and to the pink palace in Quadlinga, to fetch all their blueprints and implements for installing the great impermeable dome over Oz. That plan was mooted originally, you know, as just a last-ditch measure in case air pollution from the outer world couldn't be stopped. Now we needed it even worse in order to bring to a halt popullution!

Before the two could get back to the Emerald City all those Russians started arriving - and they're still coming! The endowment was suddenly terribly urgent. Everything's ready for it. It's supposed to take place at - oh, great heavens! thirteen

o'clock sharp, Oz time. My watch says a quarter to! And I've been gabbing away.. Anyway, toppest priority was suddenly to fetch you boys home to Oz before the dome clamps down forever. Someone had to go to inform you, and of course I volunteered. We felt it was owed to you to have some explanation of why your quest is to be aborted—*before* it's aborted. I don't suppose any of you *want* to stay here on this barren beach..? For after all the people you were going to save are already saved.

We thought it would be amusing if I dressed up like the Dorothy of old. Then that suggested asking Toto to come along as well It was Kaggi-Karr's idea. She was still, dear bird, trying to make it up to me for her dismissal of me in Seattle. But also bothered her that I was so very little like the alternate Dorothy (HER name's Elli) who she had known sixty years ago, she said, in her Oz. She wanted to go on this mission with me. It would be like old times, she said, she and me together on a last-minute rescue operation. Only it would help if I looked at least the faintest bit like the Elli she knew.

So there you have it. And now, if you're ready, Forrest? Albero? Skog? and all of you good fellows. Look your last on all things lonely. No, don't bother about your amulets and rings. Ozma's looking at us in the Magic Picture. When I make the sign of "O" "Z" with the fingers of my two hands—like so—she'll wish us back to Oz. Ready? Okay, here we go!...

C H A P T E R F I F T Y - O N E

The dome was up. Hooray, hooray! What a relief.

Actually it was more like a cake-plate cover than a dome. The foot-thick shell of magiglass (like plexiglass but also impervious to directly applied heat, so nobody could blow-torch their way through it) rose up, all around the perimeter of the land of Oz, just short of vertically, about a mile high, then leveled off rather sharply to enclose the entire country under the transparent lid. Rain could penetrate it, the sun's rays shone through freely, winds might blow but with everything first purified of all the filth that mankind so assiduously spews into the air it breathes.

In the Emerald City Ozma gave orders that every window in the Palace of Magic be thrown open and the quickly purifying air be allowed to blow through at random to clear away the fuf of months. Then she declared a "House-cleaning holiday", to last a week, during which time the entire citizenry of Oz was take tank-carts of soap and water out into the streets and fields and forests of the land and wash the houses, the trees, and the rocks, Within a fortnight Oz was back almost to its ancient state of bright colors and pristine air.

In other ways too the entire citizenry was kept hopping. Houses had to be found for the sudden tens of thousands of

new inhabitants. Magic was brought into play like fury and new garden cities rose like mushroom plantations. 'On the analogy of existing metropoli such as the Emerald City and the Sapphire City the new towns were given names of gems and precious metals. The crowd of businessmen who had strayed into Oz were settled in the Gold City, but otherwise there was little or no significance connection between town name and the type of colonists who were planted there; the Russians were gathered in the Tourmaline City and the Peridot City, the smash musicians in the Onyx City (the noise there *was* rather maddening), the American tourists in the Platinum-City and the Jade City, the Canadians in the Turquoise City, the latter two being locations that might have been expected to be populated by Chinese and Turks respectively, but as it happened there was no influx to Oz worth mentioning from those two nations—so far.

Queens Ozma and Glinda shook hands and considered themselves fortunate to have averted a worse fate for Oz. They looked up to the high 'roof' that gleamed almost two miles high above the great green city and they noted the rays of the sun being obstructed by the massed fly-specks of humanity up there. That was as far, you see, as Outer-Worlders could reach now, using the Oz-Return magic mechanisms. The wise wonder-workers touched a button on the wall of Ozma's throne room and activated a spray-hose system high up on the dome roof that soon flushed away the filth and let the sun shine in unobstructedly again.

The filth itself though, if one had been two miles nearer, would have revealed itself to be human beings, born, it is true, into a world grossly overpopulated, but each individual with his own dreams, seeking striving, hoping, waiting, yearning to be allowed into the one ultimate land of wishes come true.

To be flushed into the scuppers was painful for them, though not physically, of course. When Glinda, on the basis of Docent Henkomankatogale's blueprints, raised the great magic dome in a day, she provided that the roof clearing system be so arranged that smuts, and people, be swept into water shoot-

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the-chutes that sluiced them down the sloping sides of the dome and out onto the surrounding ground unharmed.

Under the dome joyous reunions had taken place, for instance, that of Dr. Dorothy with her son, as already described, and also of mother and son with husband, father, grandparents, mother-in-law, and whatever who was to whom. They all went off to a grand family gathering at Legerdemain Lane, which also did duty as a reception at which was announced the formal betrothal of Henk and Jinjur. The shared ordeal of Russian imprisonment appeared to have sealed the inevitability of the union of those two.

There were plenty of people in the remote forest fastness to play guests; all the thousands who had arrived from the outside world and been quartered in the big blue-purple barn and later on in the sprawling tent city next door. (This was shortly to be organized as the Zircon City.)

But other guests came to the great bridal party as well. There were all the hundreds of the proud mother's friends, too numerous to mention. Kaggi-Karr was there, feted and made much of. She'd had her way and achieved glory a second time in "original" Oz. For a last time she basked in it. Now she was to be off to show her pal, the Round Robin, what life was like in her own Magic-Land.

Dorothy wanted her friends the Ten Woodmen (now accorded capital letters by fiat of Princess Ozma in recognition of their true-hearted service in the cause of Queen and country for so many months) to be present at the gala occasion of her son's engagement. They came - and during the festivities bachelor Albero and spinster Cindy Lou met again for the first time since Seattle. They were surprised at how pleased they were to see each other. The pleasure deepened into regard and the regard, in time, gave rise to a whole tribe of attractive coffee-colored people, true pledges of devotion though scarcely needed in Oz's present circumstances.

The Woodmen were having reunions all over. First of course with their mentors, the magic-adepts Ozma and Glinda who

had sent them on their odyssey in the first place. Besides capital letters they all received medals for merit in sticking to their quest till its equivocal end. For just plain fun, however, the men preferred their reunion in the north courtyard of Ozma's palace with their favorite, the Musical Moose of Oz.

What delight to converse for the first time with the dear creature! But also for the first time ever — and *after* all stressful shared vicissitudes were over — the woodmen fell to quarreling and fighting among themselves! This was because they couldn't decide whom Moom should go home with. There were ten woodmen, you see, and only one moose.

Queen Ozma finally decided the issue by declaring that the animal was not going off with anybody but would stay right there, living in his stall among his new messmates, the Woozy and the Sawhorse, as an ornament to her court. Naturally the woodmen would have visiting privileges. No one thought to ask Moom what he wanted to do. He was just an adolescent and wouldn't know his own mind. However, he had one — and one day would show the world what his preference was.

So on with the parade of reunions for the Ten Woodmen. When the jollifications at the fledgling Zircon City were over they went in a body to Winkiezia to report on the failure of their mission to the Tin Woodman of them all.

There was a wonderful state of improvement to be observed! Now that he was double-domed (it was decided not to dismantle the smaller regional dome over Winkiezia now that it had been so lovingly and laboriously erected; it just might come in handy one day) the good Woodman reasoned that he could venture upon a replacement of his parts. It did seem safe to assume he would never more be attacked by airborne corrosives. The method followed was geniustic in its simplicity.

The clever Winkie tinsmiths constructed, using the original as meticulously followed model, an entire new woodman out of virgin tin, complete with spats and bow tie. Then, once a week, a part of the new figure was inserted into the old, the ravaged original bits being piously kept and preserved. It was judged

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that a week was long enough (actually a few minutes would have done) to insure that a new limb had become a completely viable member of the living Woodman. Conversely, when once detached from the live man, the older corroded pieces of tinsplate became completely inert. (They were presently reassembled into a complete figure representing Emperor Nick as he had been before rejuvenation and placed on display, as a memento of a distressful epoch, in the Winkle National Museum, which occupied a wing of the imperial palace.)

The Woodman's heart had of course been protected from the ravages of grime. It was removed whole from his old body and placed within the new. It was a consolation to old friends to know that of the brilliantly gleaming new Tin Woodman that amazed their eyes one part at least was from the old beloved figure they had always known.

Nicholas I presented further medals to his loyal co-professionals who had so uncomplainingly carried out the operation none of them was really fitted for. A bachelor dinner was given and many toasts drunk to yesterday: to Queen Glinda and the training program at her palace, to the publicity agents and camera crew at Disneyuniverse, to polite attendants on planes and trains, to their faithful flower buttonholes (still fresh and feisty as they sat at table), to Princess Dorothy in the railway shack on the North Island, to President Koxden and the floozy ladies, to Kaggi-Karr and the girl in the Log Cabin Visitor Center, and even to the surly barnstormer pilot and the disappearing Eskimos. The last toasts were to the Musical Moose, and to His Magnificence, Emperor—and Woodman—Nick.

Then the odd-assorted, kindly, unclever, but by now rather experienced, Ten Woodmen of Oz went home to the last reunion of all; with their own families.

C H A P T E R F I F T Y - T W O

Dorothy thought her adventures were over; not very satisfactorily, it is true, but certainly completed for this time. Sometimes she would reminisce, trying to recall where she had gone wrong, what she might have done differently, to achieve a modicum of success in her mission rather than merely pulling World War III down about everyone's head.

One day she happened to think of her sometime girl friend Najeeb Koxden and wondered what she was doing now. She strolled to the Hall of the Magic Picture, switched on the lights, drew back the protective curtain, and asked the wonderful instrument of magic to let her see the president's daughter.

The bland scene of Oz countryside faded into - rather startling darkness. 'Of course!' thought Dorothy, 'it's night where she is.' But as the girl watched on she realized that the scene was not nightblack; rather, it seemed to be a very very very dark brown. Also, she reasoned, 'If it were a night scene there would be lights showing - unless, most unlikely, Ms Koxden is in the midst of a forest without a lantern.'

Then as the princess gazed she thought she could see movement. Shapes in the prevailing gloom seemed to shift and change. She came to realize they were people—but *many* people, a great pullulating mass of them, pressing together, apparently strain-

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ing toward some goal which, however, they were prevented from reaching. And now at last a light; someone flicked on a cigarette lighter and some faces were lit up momentarily, among which the Kansas girl recognized that of her friend Najeeb, looking distraught, to say the least.

Dorothy wished like anything she could hear what the people were saying. It was obvious from her one clear glimpse that all of them were talking. Or rather, could those strained, open, but somewhat lip-motionless mouths be crying out or groaning? She longed for further looks, and now and then someone did strike a match and quite a few individuals seemed to be smoking, but the little cherry-red glow from their cigarettes was not sufficient truly to illuminate anything.

Where in the world could they be? wondered the Oz princess. All standing there in the dark, pushing and shoving. And why did nobody show a flashlight, or have candles lit?

Then somehow, she didn't know from where, the knowledge came to her.

Those people were standing among the vast multitudes of unsuccessful petitioners for entry to Oz who waited hopefully, though really without hope, in the near night-dark impenetrable smog outside the walls of Oz!

Dorothy gave a choked cry and rushed to find Princess Ozma. She was sobbing as she reached the orangery, where the fairy loved to potter among the plants. "Why, Dorothy!" she cried. "Whatever—"

The other girl broke her off. "Dearest, give me the key to the magic-cupboard, will you? I have to use the Magic Belt!"

She offered no more explanation as the Girl Ruler with a murmured "Yes, of course" detached the key from her girdle. But Ozma followed along out of curiosity as her chum ran off to the palace library.

She arrived in time to hear Dorothy say, "I want to be where Najeeb Koxden is" — and to see her vanish.

Even for the fabled wish-granting Magic Belt, trophy of Dorothy's successful campaign against the fell Nome King, it

wasn't easy to squeeze the wish-carried girl in amongst the tight-packed mob around the president's daughter. When Najeeb finally made out who it was who was additionally crammed in beside her, the two friends fell crying into each other's arms.

"Dear Miss Koxden!" wept Dorothy at last, "what in the world are you doing here? and where are we?"

"Oh, Dorothy!" sobbed Ms Koxden, dropping titles in her distress and relief. "We're somewhere outside your magic country... Oz. Oh, it's terrible! What are we going to do? I've been here for days! but I can't budge an inch. People say one of the doorways into the country is about thirty yards over that way. But I can't get to it! I'm sure, if someone only knew... that I'm here representing my dad—I mean, after all, the President of the United States...!" She broke off and wept distraughtly.

"Yes, of course," said Dorothy shortly, herself over her crying jag and prepared to deal efficiently. "Wait a second." She seized Najeeb's hand in a vice-like grip and wished on the Belt again willing it to deliver the two of them into the presence of the fairy ruler of Oz.

Ozma had strolled, puzzled, back to the orangery. Now with a glad cry she welcomed back her long-time confidante and made the acquaintance of that chum's chum. "My poor friend!" she cried to Najeeb, "you must be famished. Do sit down immediately—" She gestured toward a glass-topped scrollwork iron table the fairy sometimes used for repotting work. Then she herself ran to the orangery door, pressed a buzzer, and when little Jellia Jamb appeared ordered up a substantial supper, which presently the Ozites enjoyed watching the president's daughter tuck into.

Meanwhile Najeeb was telling her story. "All hell—oh, forgive me!—has broken loose! You know we're at war with Russia? Yes, of course. Well, the Soviets are stopping at nothing to gain the upper hand. Their spies are everywhere! although, militarily, the armies have been at a stalemate for weeks... somewhere up around Nome, Alaska, I believe." At mention of that name Dorothy had incongruously to think again of the former

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owner of her Belt, which she still had on.

"The terrifying part,' Ms Koxden vent on, "is that the spies seem to be invisible!"

She allowed a moment for that startling intelligence to sink in. "Tons of top-secret documents, plans, code lists, correspondence, disappear nightly from government offices everywhere. Dad's files are rifled regularly. Finally one night lately he decided to stay in the Oval Office over night. He *saw* filing cabinets open and shut by themselves! He was terrified. But Daddy's spunky. He stayed on. He even tried shutting drawers and doors when they opened that way. He found himself having a tug-of-war with ghosts! as he called them. But the final indignity was not yet. A moment after the last cupboard slammed shut—for the night, apparently—something invisible tweaked Dad's nose!"

"He phoned me in New York. He was quite out of himself. 'Your friend!' he babbled. 'That girl who claims to work magic. Where is she? Doctor—er, Choggolak—wasn't that her name? Can you get hold of her for me?'"

"'But, Dad,' I cried, 'she's gone back to Oz—ages ago!'"

"'You really believe that?'"

"'Of course I do. And so do you—now!'"

"'Okay, Nadge'—he calls me 'Nadge', you know—'if it's not ghosts it's gotta be magic. How do we fight it? If we could get hold of your friend—'"

"'I'll don't see how we can do that,' said I, 'without going to Oz ourselves.'"

"'Yourself,' said Dad. 'Didn't I read in the papers about some woman in California making a mint by claiming to send people to Oz?'"

"'That awful Monique!' I exclaimed. 'Still there's no reason not to believe she's doing what she claims.'"

"'I want you to see her,' instructed Dad. 'You willing? Get her to send you to Oz—if she can—and get—what's her name: Dorothy—back here to deal with these invisible spies.'"

"No way!" said Dorothy impulsively. It must be admitted that Ozma looked at her friend understandingly.

“Oh!” near-shrieked Najeeb. “Have I gone through this... ghastliness for nothing? ... If you knew!: packed in amongst those wailing, pushing, starving people. Why, we could hardly draw breath in that horrible air—and not a bathroom around anywhere. It was hideous. And now you’re not going to help?”

The two Ozite girls looked solemn. “Dear Ms Koxden,” said Ozma gravely, “we’d do anything to be useful, in a constructive way, to people in the outside world. But to choose up sides in a world war? Oz? To employ an Americanism; You gotta be kidding.’

The president’s daughter broke down again, shoved away her dishes, laid her head on her arms, and wept.

Then, presently, she raised her tear-streaked face and said; “If Dad—if the President—came here himself to make a personal plea—”

“Of course I should be very pleased to meet the head of state,” vouchsafed Ozma. “But as for making Oz magic available to fight war—or to score off political rivals, if one wishes to put a less militaristic name to it—I feel quite certain I shall never want to lend my authority to any such undertaking.”

Ms Koxden employed her handkerchief, then spoke. “But you will see Dad?” she asked hesitantly.

“I shall be very pleased,” said Ozma.

C H A P T E R F I F T Y - T H R E E

The dome over Oz was complete and final. It was magic for fighting magic. Not only could the poisons in the atmosphere not get through into the enchanted land to blacken and corrupt. Nothing could come through by magic means either. (Yet the sun, what there was of it, and the rain and the wind [carefully filtered] could enter at liberty.)

Even when Dorothy, not even; stopping to think of that aspect, wished herself to the side

of her American friend it happened by means of a delivery first to the door in the dome wall, which the girl walked through, and then, with the Belt, wished herself on the remaining thirty or forty yards through the packed mob. Then the same thing in reverse as they returned.

Now that Ozma awaited a state visit something of the same sort must take place. First there were a few preparations to be made. The queen went to get into a rather severe stateswoman's reception dress. She also did not omit to put on her traveling crown. Might as well look identifiably regal while she was at it. Then her wand; mustn't forget that. And, oh, yes; Ozma herself had never been, in latter days, to look on the horrid scene but, remembering how Stygianly dark Dorothy had reported it was outside the Dome, the Girl Ruler picked up her pocket torch.

For some reason, she always used the British expression, rather than “flashlight” as Dorothy said; no doubt she thought it sounded less unromantic.

Within the realm of magic all materials are equally available and cheap, so when Sorceress Glinda raised the great protective Dome over Oz she made the doors of gold. Doors there after all had to be. For one thing, it would be unbearable for the Ozites to feel that they lived, however luxuriously and free, inside a cage. There had to be ways out, even if no one could imagine ever wanting to go into the smog-blackened popolluted warring world outside. At the same time, there had to be a way to get in, for just such occasions as the present. There were twenty-four doors to Oz.

Dorothy’s ‘intestinal’ feeling what Oz was east of America was in fact wrong. Odd that she should feel that way because of course the very first time she went to the magic country she landed in the far eastern end of the eastern Munchkin country; ergo, Oz lies west of America. There was never a suggestion that Dorothy’s prairie house had flown across the whole of Oz before descending.

Hence it was to one of the great golden gates on the far side of the Munchkin land that the three young women now magically made their way. Ozma signified their intention of going outside to the attendant Wheeler; representatives of the various weird constituent countries of Oz had been chosen as honorary doormen at the twenty-four gates.

As the Wheeler fumbled for the golden key at his waist the little fairy explained: “We’ll just be a few minutes. We’re going to fetch someone.” And then the door was opened wide and they were all outside.

I don’t know what Ozma expected. The others had told her it was dark out there (well, it was evening), what with the impenetrable smog. They had also not failed to mention that there was one and another person to be seen outside the gates of Oz. Even so, when by the light of her ‘torch’ Ozma saw the solid wall of humanity with haggard faces and bedraggled

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garments standing there in the dark and looking so despairingly at the opening door, she burst into gasping sobs.

"Oh, how dreadful," she cried. "How terribly dreadful... Oh, be prompt, ladies! Fetch the President back quickly. I don't know how much of this I can stand." It was understood that Dorothy was going along with Ms Koxden, partly as moral support but also to operate) the Magic Belt.

The two departing girls looked at each other anxiously but Ozma waved them on with a royal gesture. They joined hands and disappeared.

Ozma just stood there, crying. The Wheeler didn't know which way to turn. He daren't address royalty without a signal to do so. He didn't even have a handkerchief to offer the weeping queen. He just coasted nervously back and forth on his toy-wagon wheels. Ozma cried on.

The mob outside the gate continued to teem. Curiously nobody ventured to offer all impertinence to the delicate little princess and shoulder past her into the promised land. But they did do something. There was an extra movement among the shifting wriggling crowd and a young child was shoved forward from among the legs of older standers-by. His face was dirty, from the long sojourn in the filthy choking air with no access to a washroom, but he had big eyes (wet) and a lot of curly hair.

The child made his way the couple of steps to Ozma. He had no hat (funny how hats, even when needed, had gone totally out of fashion!) but if he had had it would have been in his hand. "Please, ma'm," he said. "Can I come in?"

"Of course, darling!" said the fairy queen without even thinking twice.

The child smiled wonderfully and passed within the gate of gold. At that children shot forward from all directions out of the vast throng and clustered about the girl ruler, plucking at her skirts. She waved them all through.

That started a stampede. Adults no longer held back and in their efforts to be first, to get through into heaven while the brief chance was there, they stormed the gate, no longer taking the

slightest heed of Ozma, who was knocked down for her pains when she didn't get out of the way.

Such was the scene when President Koxden and his entourage, with Dorothy Choggolak and Miss Koxden, arrived. The Kansas princess, no sentimentalist, instantly used the Magic Belt to freeze the mob (not icily, to be sure) in its tracks while it could be sorted out what ought to be done.

Queen Ozma was scrabbling for her dropped wand as President Koxden hastened forward to assist her to her feet. The famous meeting of the two heads of state took place amidst rather awkward circumstances. In those few minutes while the envoys had been out in the outer world collecting the president that thing had happened which made the great leader's visit virtually irrelevant. Ozma (especially with no Glinda there to guide her) had completely lost interest in making magic available to the world as a weapon against pollution. Oz had its own and absolute depollutant now and had resigned itself to letting the outer world stew in its own dirty juice. But the refugee problem exercised all soft-hearted souls in the magic land and Ozma's heart was the softest.

While the others stood around, looking at each other uncertainly, even worriedly, the little fairy ruler kept waving her flashlight, motioning the streaming crowd to file—albeit in orderly fashion—on into Oz. "Give me your tired, your poor," she cried, "your huddled masses yearning to breathe free! I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

C H A P T E R F I F T Y - F O U R

Queen Glinda *almost* stamped her foot in annoyance.

“Now see what you’ve done, your grace!” she said to fellow-Queen Ozma as they stood behind the window-doors looking out on the presentation balcony and across to the big park opposite the Palace of Magic. There a vast tent town spread, a city within a city. “All the amenity of Oz is gone!” complained the good witch. “Where before, with the modest population, there was plenty of room for other, better, things, like charm and leisure, freedom from care, full employment - if one wanted it—adventure, romance, fun!, now there’s just people. I can hardly believe your’re satisfied...?”

“Oh, Glinda don’t scold,” pleaded the sad-eyed little fairy. “I had to do it. To close off Oz against the children of the world? I simply hadn’t the heart for that.” She was near to tears again, as indeed she had been ever since her shocking realization at the Munchkin Gate.

“Well, well,” muttered Glinda, trying to be mollified. “It speaks well of that heart—if not of your brain. Only now Oz is just as awful as everywhere else. Had you thought of that? What advantage have all these people now in coming to this country? An amenity is only an amenity, you know, as long as it remains theoretical: something that one can aspire to enjoy but not that

everyone in the world does enjoy. As soon as they attempt that it becomes a demandable 'right' and savorless, or disappears completely. You've turned Oz from a land of Might-Have-Been into a land of *Is*: a place just like everywhere else—and dreadful."

"I know, dear. I know. Believe me, I've thought of nothing else for weeks now. I haven't been getting much sleep. But in the sleepless watches of the night I've thought of something; there's just a chance - but here, in a magic land, a pretty good one—that would solve everything.

"And what is that, your grace?"

"I'll need your help, Glinda. But you're so gifted. You raised this mighty dome over Oz. What I propose is no more... magnitudinous." The fairy smiled wanly. "Afterwards, of course, everything will be much *less* magnitudinous."

"My curiosity is fully aroused, Ozma. Do tell," urged the southern sorceress with an indulgent if ironical look.

"It's what the great outer world must come to in time, if they are never going to stop their vast and indiscriminate birth-giving.

Indeed, didn't I read that experiments are being carried on now in America?; they've flown the entire pigmy population of Africa to the New World to use in their teat-tube parenthood campaign; producing a whole new generation only half the size of former ones.

"We can do the same, only on a far vaster scale."

"You mean—?"

"Yes. With magic we could reduce everyone in Oz to a size—oh, say one centimeter high. Then there'd be abundant room for all of us. And think of the abundance of everything else! The whole palace here could dine to repletion on a single strawberry."

Glinda's quick mind was busy with all the implications. "You'd have to reduce all other moving life on the same scale," she predicted. "No use having ordinary house-flies to contend with that are like vast dragons bigger than a man."

"No. I'd thought of that. But not plant life; otherwise you'd

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lose the advantage of the great relative abundance of food, and all the other benefits we have of plants.”

“Planning such a move would take months,” the witch warned. “Actually, the magic involved is quite simple. With the implements I always have with me, reinforced perhaps by your use of your—well, Dorothy’s—Magic Belt, I could probably do the task while we waited. But—”

“Oh, Glinda, let’s do!” cried Ozma all aflame. “Why plan? People would only come up with a thousand objections. On the other hand, learning to cope with the suddenly and so drastically altered circumstances of life would provide instant employment for everyone in Oz.” The Girl Ruler motioned to the scores of idlers across the street who lounged against trees, smoking cigarettes—if not worse—or shying pebbles at the palace windows, just for fun.

“Are you serious, Your Majesty?” asked Glinda wondering, but not, in her heart, averse.

“Yes! Oh, come, let’s do it right away, before we have time to stop and lose our courage.” The fairy princess was already on her way out of the salon. Glinda followed along quizzically as Ozma led the way along the hall to the Library, where the belt was stored. On the way Glinda picked up her red witch’s-satchel from a hall table.

In the big library room furnished in charming Louis XV style, Ozma flicked the light switch at the doorpost. “In just a few minutes,” remarked Glinda whimsically, “that’s not going to be so easy.”

“Never mind,” urged Ozma as whimsically. “For the really big tasks, like getting across a door sill or turning on a light, we’ll still have the use of magic.”

The princess pulled open the drawer of a table where the Magic Belt was kept, while Glinda put down her bag on a chair and rummaged within. Then the two great adepts of magic, one a fairy, the other a witch, invoked the aid of their powerful implements of enchantment.

“Let every living moving creature in Oz be reduced to one

one-hundredth of its normal size," was the burden of their wish.

In an instant, without a sound, the work was done.

Two tiny figures peered out wonderingly round the vast foot of a rococo library chair.

Lund

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