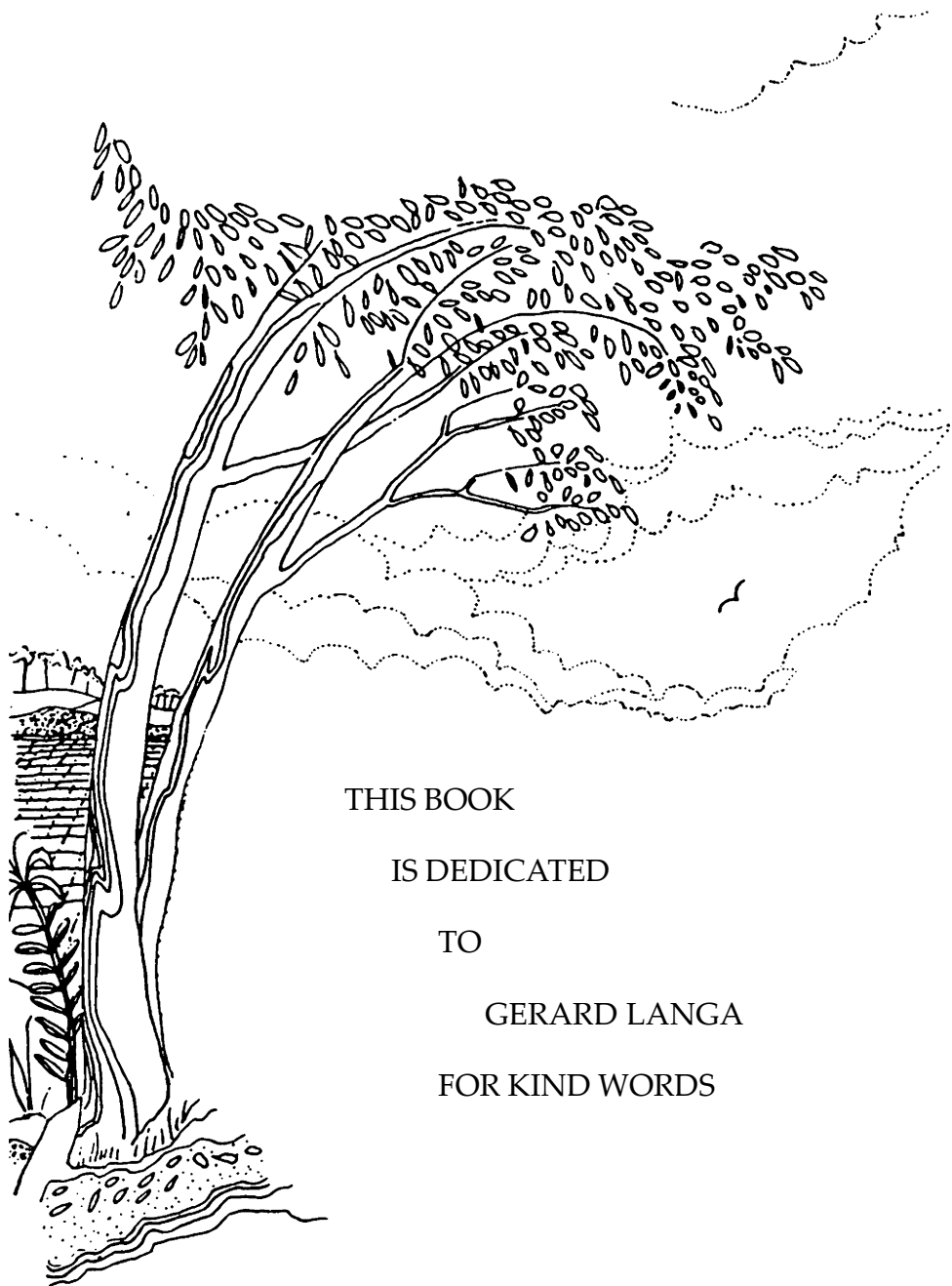


The China
Dog
in OZ





THIS BOOK

IS DEDICATED

TO

GERARD LANGA

FOR KIND WORDS

The China Dog in Oz

By March Laumer
& Ruth Tuttle

Founded on and Continuing
the Stories by March Laumer



1990

THE OZ BOOKS OF MARCH LAUMER

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“Gosh,” said Toby, the life-sized pug, “do you mean to say there’s a whole country full of china animals in Oz?”

“Natch,” said the Pink Kitten. “You imagine it, we’ve got it. That’s the rule in this country.”

“Well, I’ve often imagined it—in my wildest dreams,” confessed the dog, “but I never imagined—!” Words failed him!

“What brought that up anyway?” said Eureka, getting up and stretching. “Oh, a book.” Her interest quotient plummeted. The kitten, though very intelligent, had never learned to read. Toby, on the other hand, now that he was magically mobile had spent the last year, what time he and his cat friend weren’t wasting in idle gamboling, diligently acquiring literacy. You never knew when it might come in handy to be able to read, and even if it didn’t, it would be fun. Toby, intelligent in his own right, had noticed that individuals intent upon reading nearly always looked to be at ease and contented, and sometimes they laughed out loud. Ergo, reading was probably a fun thing to do.

Right now he was working his way through the series of histories of the land of Oz and he had got as far as *The Wonderful Wizard*. “It says here that Miss Gale and a lot of the people we know visited a ‘dainty china country’ pretty soon after she first arrived here. Isn’t that fascinating?”

“Only if one’s fascination threshold is very low,” said the cat nonchalantly. “Dorothy told me all about it. She’s always been very fond of china knickknacks. At the time I was excited to hear how her trip to witch Glinda to get help was going to end so it seemed to me that china country just got in the way.”

“Oh, well, don’t tell me how it turns out!” warned the (also) china dog. “I want to be surprised.”

That seemed fair enough and the pink kitten left him to get on with it. That’s how Toby, through devotion to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, almost missed out on *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, which was taking place when Eureka got downstairs. She strolled into a linen closet next door to Princess Dorothy’s suite. (The

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next room was occupied by Dorothy's ceramics collection, cabinets upon cabinets of it.) Among the bedding and nappery the kitten discovered a glass cat.

"Good heavens, a glass cat," she said. "Where did you come from?"

"The home of Dr. Pipt."

"Who's that?"

"A powerful crooked magician in the land of the Munchkins. He made me."

"Out of glass?"

"Completely. I have pink brains. You can see 'em roll around when I think.

"That's nothing. I'm pink all over."

"So I noticed."

"But what are you doing in the linen cupboard?"

"Search me. It was that girl Dorothy's idea. She wanted to go eat her dinner so she stuck me in here. I didn't get the connection."

"Maybe she thought you'd get glass fibres on her bedspread if you lay on that."

"Mmm. What about you?"

"My name's Eureka. I'm Dorothy's pet." In the interests of frankness she added, "One of them that is. She's also got an awful black dog."

"I met it," related the glass cat. "At first I didn't know what it was. There aren't any dogs in Oz, you know."

"Well, actually there are," corrected Eureka. "Dorothy saw one in the dainty china country. She told me about it. It was little and purple."

"'Dainty China Country.' That's a new one on me," said the glass cat. "China's not as fine as glass, of course, but it might be kind of interesting to see."

But flesh animals were of more interest to the kitten and she reverted. "Did that black dog go for you?" she asked, "you being a cat and all."

"Why, no, it didn't. It seemed remarkably mild. I thought it

was probably under sedation. It sniffed the patchwork quilt girl we had along with us but didn't do anything. Oh, it went up once and rubbed its head against the Dorothy girl's hand where she was standing by the mantelshelf fiddling with some figurines. But it never said anything."

"It. I like that," said Eureka. "No; it never speaks, just yaps fit to wake the dead—but not even that consistently. Quite odd. I understand it's been that way ever since it temporarily turned into a bull terrier. Mostly it's a cairn. Bit manic, I think. Never mind. You staying here long?"

"Search me. Nobody's said. We've been on kind of a quest but one of our members got tossed in jail and I think that's rather thrown a monkey wrench in the works... Say, have you ever seen a woozy?"

"A woozy? Why, no, I don't think I have. What are they for?"

"Lighting fires mostly. Their eyes shoot sparks when they get annoyed. They're kinda neat. You want to see one?"

"I don't mind if I do," said Eureka. "Have you got one?"

"There's one around somewhere. We found it on the way. It also got sent away when Dorothy went to put on the feed bag. She gave word for it to be fed. I think she kinda liked it. I saw her patting him. She did me too—but then she quit. I don't think I'm going to be any pet of hers."

"Oh, well, good. Then we needn't be rivals," said the pink kitten. "I'm her pet."

"You're welcome to the job," dismissed Bungle as she led the way she thought the Woozy might have gone. Soon they came upon him, in a box room.

The pink kitten was suitably impressed by the blue Woozy. Secretly it occurred to her that they made quite a color-complementary couple. She observed his squareness (which gave way in places to rectangularity) from every angle and made appropriately commendatory remarks. "I hope that honeycomb's to your taste," she said. "I know the bees that made it."

The newcomers to the palace were not slow to take advantage of the insider's knowledge possessed by their new kitten

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acquaintance. Eureka knew all about everything concerning “her” palace and was glad to play cicerone. She showed the cat and woozy the orangery, Dorothy’s pottery room, the Hall of the Magic Picture, and presently brought them to the reading room on the third floor.

Toby had just closed the big green volume after reading the famous sentence, “I’m so glad to be at home again!” and felt most edified. He turned to see whom his friend the kitten had brought in.

Well, everybody liked everybody. Toby and the Woozy were each glad to meet another male. Eureka was proud to show off her canine friend. The glass cat was astonished—and frankly admiring—at seeing someone almost (well, certainly not *quite!*) as unusual as herself and openly admitted that if china had not the clarity of glass it was more colorful. The Woozy had to smile and said, “Bungle has pink brains, our new friend has a pink neck bow, and Eureka is pink all over. I’d better get myself something pink to wear if we’re going to be a bunch.”

In fact the creatures’ encounter was all so goody-goo that it might have become cloying if the glass cat had not said to Toby, “You’ve got a chipped toe, I see.”

“Yes,” admitted the dog ruefully. “A little girl did that. She never meant to, of course, and she was so sorry afterwards.”

“Beware of little girls,” said Bungle sententiously and the others thought she might be getting her own back after the disdain shown her by Princess Dorothy. “What are you going to do about it?” she went on.

“Do?” said Toby. “Why, I don’t know. I didn’t think there was anything one could do about it. The chip was lost long ago—even if there had been any glue strong enough...” He trailed off.

“Hmf,” sniffed the cat. “That hardly seems good enough. I myself haven’t a scratch or a crack on me. I’ve been careful, but if I had got any I wouldn’t have been content to let it rest at that.”

Now the pink kitten had always regretted that her friend had a sore toe. On the other hand, it was the wave of tenderness

that swept over her when she first observed the wound[§] that had started her liking the china pug who ended up being her closest (let's face it: *only*) friend among animals in Oz. She still cherished the chippedness of the toe and wasn't sure that she at all cared to have it mended. And yet she couldn't say she wanted Toby to go around with a limp the rest of his life.

"Does it hurt?" said the Woozy.

"I don't think it does. I'm not quite sure what 'hurt' means. But it's awkward for trying to chase a ball or anything."

"I think we ought to get it seen to," said the glass cat, who was a perfectionist and didn't like to see any work of art, even—or especially—domestic, at all defaced.

"How to go about it?" they all wondered. Then Toby had an idea.

"I'll bet they'd know what to do in the dainty china country," he said. "It says in the book they're always falling over and breaking themselves. Unless they are just going eventually to turn into a pile of chips and shards they must know how to repair themselves."

"They might, at that," said Bungle. "Maybe we should go and see."

§ See *The Careless Kangaroo of Oz*. Editor's note.

A little ladybug zoomed into a garden on a breeze that deposited her on a Snow Queen hibiscus bush. She posed like a jewel against the snowy-white edge surrounding an apple-green serrated leaf.

As she caught her breath she looked around to see what sort of world she had landed in this time.

Recently there had been precious few friends to talk to in the scraggly unkempt excuse for a garden that fate seemed to think she should adorn. Oh yes, there had been plenty of aphids to satisfy her appetite and keep her looking plump and shiny, and to bring out the brilliant orange color of her wings. But congenial friends? Not a one. The garden had been dry, unfertilized, neglected, and forgotten by its absentee owners for many months past. Not a single butterfly or moth to exchange the latest gossip with, or even a dragonfly from whom to learn what was new in far-away places.

But this place with lush greenery all around seemed to her like heaven as she settled in to stay forever, if allowed. What interesting little parties one could plan: set a tea table with a delicate cloth of cobwebs spread over a rose petal; serve dew-drops with bits of mint leaf and nectar from nearby myrtle blossoms. Hummingbirds and butterflies could no doubt be counted on to stop by and rest for a few moments in their daily search for food amid the delights of the garden.

Lurabelle Ladybug lost no time in preparing just such a tempting tea table so as to be ready—in case. Then she squatted down and waited and as she did so the Rev. Foldinglegs I. Mantis happened to stroll by. He stopped.

“Good afternoon,” said Lurabelle. “Won’t you sit down and visit for a few minutes?”

“Thank you,” said the Rev. Mr. Mantis. “I believe I would enjoy the company of so charming a hostess as you appear to be. If we may first say just a few words of prayer in thanks for this beautiful day, I will be happy to tell you something of our garden.”



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As Lurabelle filled the tiny cups with her mint tea, Mr. Foldinglegs arranged his long thin limbs under the petal table in such a way that they were virtually unnoticeable.

"We in this garden," he then said, "are such a congenial bunch! We rarely have any arguments or fussing. I'm sure you will enjoy living here, should you decide to settle permanently. You seem the sort of insect to fit into our group nicely."

"Thank you," said Lurabelle. "Please have more of the aphid patties," she went on, passing the little plate. "As a matter of fact I abhor fumers and fussers. They waste so much time."

"We do have one character here that no one really likes," said the reverend gentleinsect. "It's a big fat green thing that lives in the poinsettia bush. She eats continuously, ruins the leaves, and is, besides, frightening to look at. You will do well to keep your distance from her."

"Oh, I will," said Miss Ladybug. "Thank you so much for warning me."

"And now I shall be on my way," said the Rev. Mr. Mantis, unwrapping his legs from the hibiscus stem. Lurabelle had given up the idea of moving on to a rose-bush, realizing how awkward it would be for guests to have to keep thinking of avoiding the thorns.

With a tip of his hat the divine was off down the path to attend to his various duties in the garden parish.

Climbing a bit higher in the bush Lurabelle looked across the garden—past daisies and poppies, to what she had noticed on first flying in: a small lake. 'How delightful,' she thought. 'If it is no farther away than it looks I might take a little while to explore its beauty. It would be good exercise after the meal.' Lurabelle had been a bit greedy and eaten up all the leftovers after the minister had departed.

At that moment Timothy Inchworm appeared far down below under the spreading hibiscus. The ladybug watched as he slowly made his way up through the branches and then rested his chin on the tea table two twig-levels down. "Good afternoon, Miss Ladybug. Pardon me but I read your thoughts about going

to the lake. I'm psychic, you see."

"Oh, I didn't know," said Lurabelle, acknowledging his existence. "In fact, I don't know you. I'm new here."

That was the cue for Timothy to introduce himself. He explained a little about his profession. "I measure things. I've measured the distance from here to the lake many times and it almost always comes out the same. You're right: the lake is no farther away than it looks."

"How could the distance be 'almost' the same each time?" enquired Miss L., intrigued. "The lake doesn't move, does it?"

"Only up and down—sometimes, in a wind. Not sideways," admitted the inchworm. "Not so far. But you see, sometimes someone gets in my way and then I lose count. For instance, that silly kitten Eureka almost stepped on me once. Not content with that, she went on to pretend that I was an undersized mouse. She kept on pushing and tossing me around 'til I quite lost count. For a while I could hardly measure even half an inch. I had to rest afterwards and meditate for such a long time that people began to say I counted for nothing.

"Anyway, for your enlightenment, the distance from here to the lake is six hundred times my length, which works out at about fifty human-feet. Is that going to help you, Miss—er...?"

"Lurabelle," supplied his hostess. "Why, yes. You are very kind to offer the information. If the weather is nice I think I will visit the lake tomorrow. In the meantime, let me invite you to tea. I can whip up some more of my mint blend in no time. I seem to remember having heard that mint tea is particularly helpful for psychic beings. I believe it puts them in a very relaxed and receptive mood."

"Thank you, Lurabelle. I may call you 'Lurabelle', may I not?" The lady-beetle simpered. "It is nice to find someone who understands these things. I dare say you know the difference, for instance, between thinking and meditating. But some of our garden friends are so difficult to talk to. Take Bettina Butterfly. She hasn't a serious thought in her head. She is a sweet vivacious girl, whom I admire and respect but could never really converse

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with. And yet, her bright pink wings with pale blue veins attract the attention of all who come near her and her life is a happy carefree adventure, as she goes from flower to flower, drinking their nectar and exchanging secrets with those she meets.”

Thus Lurabelle Ladybug and Timothy Inchworm fleeted the time. Presently the latter crawled back down tile hibiscus stem to his hone underneath the bush, feeling happy about his new neighbor and content with the world in general.

"Boy, what nerve," said the Glass Cat. "Did you see the way they grabbed that adventure out from under us?"

"Yes, I noticed," said the Woozy sadly. He had just been crying at the trial of Ojo the Unlucky^s and the mood lingered on.

"I'm mad enough to spit tacks," reported the cat. "I'd like to show those two females a thing or two."

"Are you referring to Her Gracious Majesty, Ozma, Queen of All Oz, and the American princess, Dorothy Gale?" said the pink kitten.

"Those are the ones!"

The quartet of new friends were back in the china dog's favorite snuggery, the reading room on the third floor of the Palace of Magic. They were discussing the outcome of the trial by non-jury that had taken place in the throne room of that same Palace that morning.

"What an awful place for a trial anyway," grumbled Bungle. "That threatening throne in the corner of the hall. I suppose she's got a throne in every room?" she accused, very unjustly.

"Well, not *every* room," corrected Eureka, secretly enjoying the glass cat's animadversions. They made her feel quite warm toward her glass colleague, although admittedly solid glass was something it was a little hard to feel warm about.

"And what a shocking performance; gathering all those hundreds of people to witness the embarrassment of the poor boy. And for what? Picking a miserable blade of grass!"

"Oh, it's the law of the land," justified the kitten. "And Ozma is frightfully just—if by 'just' you mean enforcing laws however unreasonable right down to the last comma and period."

"Mmm," mused the Woozy. "On the way here I heard the Shaggy Man talking about how powerful and just the little queen is."

"That explains why she holds her trials in the throne room

^s See *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*. Editor's note.

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instead of some discreet side chamber,” said Bungle. “I suppose it’s the biggest room in the building...?”

“Well, except for the ballroom,” admitted the kitten. “But what are you getting at?”

“Just that this Princess Ozma must have to hold non-stop trials over all the cows in Oz, and that would fill up the throne room, if not a football field.”

“Cows?” enquired the china pug, while the Woozy reminisced:

“Yes, I almost thought there *was* a haunting fragrance of barnyard in the trial room just now.”

“Sure,” pursued the glass cat. “Because grazing cows, of which I’ve noticed plenty, must account for a few million clover plants every day, including—no doubt—some six-leaved ones. And there will be Queen Ozma at her magic picture justly jotting down every little crime. What in the world has she got a stupid rule like that for anyway?”

“Just to keep us on our toes, I guess,” posited the pink kitten. “Like Big Sister watching over us.”

“Oh, now be fair,” put in the generous Woozy. “Queen Ozma explained that the prohibition was to keep people from practising magic. Six-leaf clovers are a powerful part of certain charms, it seems.”

“Just enforcing the anti-sorcery rule isn’t enough?” queried Bungle sourly. “In that case, yellow butterflies become potential criminals, flying around with wings that are big medicine in the wrong hands. And what about yourself? If you took a pair of scissors to your tail hairs and then they fell into the possession of an unscrupulous magicworker you’d be the accessory to crime.

“What a hollow mockery,” the bigger cat went on. “The injustice of the whole thing—well, it’s scarcely a case of ‘justice’ or not; rather of sheer nonsense. It’s shown by the way everybody cheered when the princess forgave Ojo. If he’d actually done anything harmful, it would be ridiculous to forgive him—like sweetly saying ‘Oh, that’s all right’ to somebody who’d just murdered a whole family.”

"Temper, temper," cautioned the kitten, secretly hoping her now much-admired fellow feline would go on all day.

"But what really made me burn," pursued Bungle right on cue, "was the way that bunch blew up our search party and started arranging everything to suit themselves: one was to go here and another wasn't to go there. That American girl and the fellow made out of straw inviting themselves in on the quest and then starting to say what was to happen to us! The girl said I was to be turned over to a serving wench! Nuts to that. I don't belong to that girl—"

"But you said you didn't want to go along with the rescue party any more," pointed out the Woozy, continuing to be fair.

"Right. Who wanted to go traveling with that stuck-up girl, who doesn't like me any better than I do her. And that just *she* is appointed to direct my affairs...!" The cat seethed a bit and then continued. "I loved the way the dear old Patchwork Girl told Ozma where to get off when she started saying what Scraps was to do." Then, turning to the Woozy, "I just wish you'd stuck up for yourself," she said, "when she decided to stop you going along with the party."

"Oh, but she's a queen and all," disclaimed the modest Woozy.

"Never mind. I'm glad you're with us. Now the question is: what do we do to wipe their eyes?"

"Wipe their eyes'?" echoed everybody, shocked.

"Sure, make 'em feel sorry they've been so mean—and not just to us."

"We might run away," suggested the pink kitten demurely.

"Oh!"

Everybody considered the proposal. The two law-abiding males thought such a punishment might be too exquisite, whereas the glass cat thought it might not be exquisite enough. "Who would care?" she stated the problem succinctly.

That's right. Who would? The Woozy and Glass Cat were strangers in the Emerald City, having only been there two days. Nobody would miss them. Besides, animosities had already been

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aroused. Dorothy Gale had said right out she wasn't much charmed by Bungle, and Ozma had rejected out of hand the Woozy's wish to continue as one of the original rescue party. As for the Pink Kitten, she had spoiled her rep right at the time of her first arrival in Oz[§] and had never seemed to be able to live down the damage caused then. Meanwhile, Toby, the life-sized pug, though everyone liked him, was really only at court as an appendage of Eureka the kitten.

Such thinking was bad for the animals' egos and they all grew quite depressed reflecting how their bid for freedom and justice might not even be noticed.

"I suppose we'd have to ask Ozma's permission?" suggested Toby presently,

"To run away?!" said Bungle with scorn. "If you get permission, it's not running away any more."

There was a short pause. "Anyway we'll have to leave a note," said the china dog, who really *was* rather law-abiding by nature and didn't like to show lack of regard.

"Have to'?" scoffed the glass cat. "I'm not leaving any note."

But Toby did. Eureka aided and abetted him to the extent of jumping up on the library table and pushing off onto the floor a piece of paper and a pencil for him to write on and with.

"Called away," he wrote. Then they pinned the note to the carpet. After the others had gone out the china dog sneaked back and added: "Maybe we can help."

§ See *Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz*. Editor's note.

Before them was a great stretch of country having a floor as smooth and shining and white as the bottom of a big platter. Scattered around were many houses made entirely of china and painted in the brightest colors. These houses were quite small, the biggest of them reaching only as high as Dorothy's waist. There were also pretty little barns, with china fences around them; and many cows and sheep and horses and pigs and chickens, all made of china, were standing about in groups.

But the strangest of all were the people who lived in this queer country. There were milk-maids and shepherdesses, with bright-colored bodices and golden spots all over their gowns; and princesses with most gorgeous frocks of silver and gold and purple; and shepherds dressed in knee-breeches with pink and yellow and blue stripes down them, and golden buckles on their shoes; and princes with jewelled crowns upon their heads, wearing ermine robes and satin doublets; and funny clowns in ruffled gowns, with round red spots upon their cheeks and tall, pointed caps. And, strangest of all, these people were all made of china, even to their clothes, and were so small that the tallest of them was no higher than Dorothy's knee.

No one did so much as look at the travellers at first, except one little purple china dog with an extra-large head, which came to the wall and barked at them in a tiny voice, afterward running away again.

"How shall we get down?" asked Dorothy.

They found the ladder so heavy they could not pull it up, so the Scarecrow fell off the wall and the others jumped down upon him so that the hard floor would not hurt their feet. Of course they took pains not to light on his head and get the pins in their feet. When all were safely down they picked up the Scarecrow, whose body was quite flattened out, and patted his straw into shape again.

"We must cross this strange place in order to get to the other side," said Dorothy; "for it would be unwise for us to go any other way except due South."

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They began walking through the country of the china people, and the first thing they came to was a china milk-maid milking a china cow. As they drew near the cow suddenly gave a kick and kicked over the stool, the pail, and even the milk-maid herself, they all falling on the china ground with a great clatter.

Dorothy was shocked to see that the cow had broken her leg short off, and that the pail was lying in several small pieces, while the poor milk-maid had a nick in her left elbow.

"There!" cried the milk-maid angrily; "see what you have done! My cow has broken her leg, and I must take her to the mender's shop and have it glued on again. What do you mean by coming here and frightening my cow?"

"I'm very sorry," returned Dorothy. "Please forgive us."

But the pretty milk-maid was much too vexed to make any answer. She picked up the leg sulkily and led her cow away, the poor animal limping on three legs. As she left them the milk-maid cast many reproachful glances over her shoulder at the clumsy strangers, holding her nicked elbow close to her side.

Dorothy was quite grieved at this mishap.

"We must be very careful here," said the kindhearted Woodman, "or we may hurt these pretty little people so they will never get over it."

A little farther on Dorothy met a most beautifully dressed young princess, who stopped short as she saw the strangers and started to run away.

Dorothy wanted to see more of the Princess, so she ran after her; but the china girl cried out, "Don't chase me! Don't chase me!"

She had such a frightened little voice that Dorothy stopped and said, "Why not?"

"Because," answered the princess, also stopping, a safe distance away, "if I run I may fall down and break myself."

"But could you not be mended?" asked the girl.

"Oh, yes; but one is never so pretty after being mended, you know," replied the Princess.

"I suppose not," said Dorothy.

"Now there is Mr. Joker, one of our clowns," continued the china lady, "who is always trying to stand upon his head. He has broken himself so often that he is mended in a hundred places, and doesn't look at all pretty. Here he comes now, so you can see for yourself."

Indeed, a jolly little clown now came walking toward them, and Dorothy could see that in spite of his pretty clothes of red and yellow and green he was completely covered with cracks, running every which way and showing plainly that he had been mended in many places.

The Clown put his hands in his pockets, and after puffing out his cheeks and nodding his head at them saucily he said,

"My lady fair,
Why do you stare
At poor old Mr. Joker?
You're quite as stiff
And prim as if
You'd eaten up a poker!"

"Be quiet, sir!" said the Princess. "Can't you see these are strangers, and should be treated with respect?"

"Well, that's respect, I expect," declared the Clown, and immediately stood upon his head.

"Don't mind Mr. Joker," said the Princess to Dorothy. "He is considerably cracked in his head, and that makes him foolish."

"Oh, I don't mind him a bit," said Dorothy. "But you are so beautiful," she continued, "that I am sure I could love you dearly. Won't you let me carry you back to Kansas, and stand you on Aunt Em's mantel-shelf? I could carry you in my basket."

"That would make me very unhappy," answered the china Princess. "You see, here in our country we live contentedly, and can talk and move around as we please. But whenever any of us are taken away our joints at once stiffen, and we can only stand straight and look pretty. Of course that is all that is expected of us when we are on mantel-shelves and cabinets and drawing-room tables, but our lives are much pleasanter here in our own country."

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"I would not make you unhappy for all the world!" exclaimed Dorothy; "so I'll just say good-bye."

"Good-bye," replied the princess.

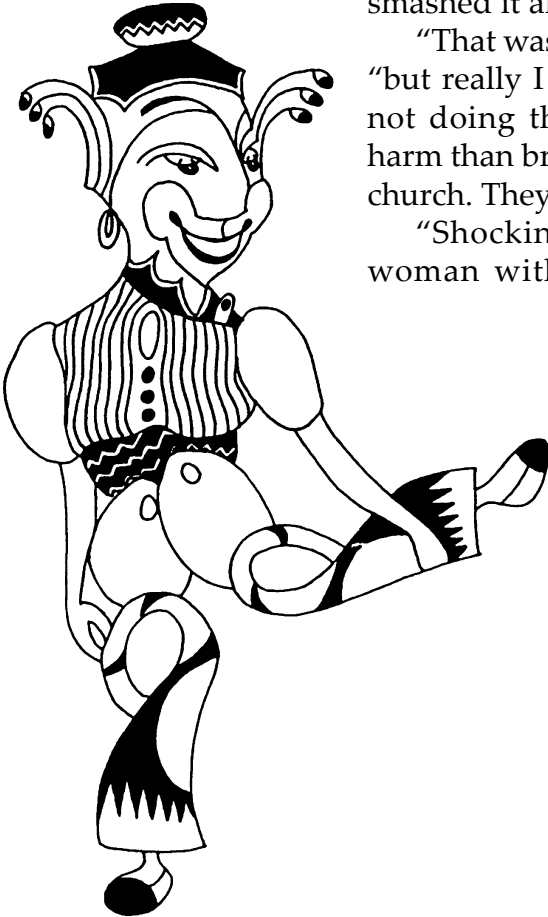
They walked carefully through the china country. The little animals and all the people scampered out of their way, fearing the strangers would break them, and after an hour or so the travellers reached the other side of the country and came to another china wall.

It was not so high as the first, however, and by standing upon the Lion's back they all managed to scramble to the top. Then the Lion gathered his legs under him and jumped on the wall; but just as he jumped he upset a china church with his tail and smashed it all to pieces.

"That was too bad," said Dorothy, "but really I think we were lucky in not doing these little people more harm than breaking a cow's leg and a church. They are all so brittle!"

"Shocking," said a china charwoman with arms akimbo as she watched them go.

"Did you hear that great flesh girl's parting shot?" exclaimed a china churchwarden. "'No more harm than breaking a church'! The very idea. And even then the church took second place after a cow's leg. What luck that I happened to be outside, otherwise I'd have been smashed too in the fall of our church."



"But what are we going to do?" cried a china chambermaid who was always very steadfast in her devotions. "I've got no place to pray now with Old South Church gone. We can't just leave it at that!"

"No," said the churchwarden thoughtfully with chin in hand. "We'll certainly have to see about reconstruction. We can't do without a church even if those intruders apparently can."

"Reconstruction'?" put in a china chieftain. "What do you mean by that? All we can do is send for the mender—and he's never had to take on anything the size of a building before. I doubt he can cope."

"You may be right," admitted the pensive churchwarden. "'Tis very grievous to be thought upon."

"Hey, mister," cried a china child, pulling on the warden's coattails. "What dumbbell planned our country anyway? Making us live inside a great big china dish where we're all sure to break if we ever fall down. Look!" The little boy in knee pants pointed to his shin, which was disfigured by a long crack and some faint traces of glue. (Like many children he was not fond of washing and the dried glue remainders had been hanging on there for many weeks.

"Oh, that was the Lamebrain," replied the churchwarden, prepared to instruct. The reference, a jocular-fond one, was of course to Laym F. Breign, one brilliant inventor who had dreamed up the China Country ages before but then hadn't been able to think of anything fitting to do with it. "But I'm afraid it's far too late to call on him to do any reconstructing here. The last I heard he had got involved in inventing plots so complicated they could only be resolved at the last by the intervention of *dei ex machinis*, so he spends all his time with gods and goddesses now. He's had no time to come near us in centuries."

Some of the China-Countrymen, stirred by curiosity about the strange people from the outside world, had been following the group of tourists at a distance. They now came up to their compatriots at the wall. M. Andrew Joker led the contingent and

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the little china Chihuahua tailed after them. There was even a china Chinaman in the crowd.

The Clown said:

"I've got an idea.

Say so if I'm wrong.

But I started to think,

So I tagged on along.

Those people that passed:

Made of straw, flesh, and tin.

They shouldn't be living.

They are. What's the gen?"

"I'm not sure I take your meaning, Mr. Joker," said the churchwarden gravely.

"Well, one wouldn't expect people not made out of china to be alive. And yet they are. I think there must be big magic available in the outer world where they come from. What if we made an expedition out to see what we could find to help in rebuilding our church?"

"Oh," deflated the Princess, "we'd stiffen up at once. Like I told that flesh girl, Whenever any of us are taken away our joints at once stiffen."

"We don't know that, your grace," returned M. Andrew. "None of us have ever *been* taken away, that I ever heard of, and if some were we never got any word back about what happened to them."

The Princess retired into a sulk at the doubting of her dictum and said no more. But the thoughtful churchwarden opined, "It might be worth a try. We could lower somebody over the great wall of china and *see* whether he stiffens up."

"I volunteer," said the clown. "I'm so cracked anyway I'm practically expendable."

Enthusiasm for the idea swept the crowd and nearly all of the china people made their way to the china village, where there were a few shops. At the hardware store they acquired china hooks and ladders and then went on to a place where the encircling wall was lowest. It was no time before Mr. Joker

had clambered up and there he sat on top of the wall and said, "Oh, my!"

"What is it?" cried the others, full of curiosity.

"It's all red on this side," reported the Clown. "What a strange effect. It seems to be built of all sorts of queer substances. I can't see any china at all." He leaned out further to see where the wall met the ground—and then the china people heard a shriek and he disappeared from view.

"Oh, heaven!" cried the China-Countrymen. "How terrible. He's been cracked in a hundred shivers!"

Unmindful of his dignity the Churchwarden scrambled up the china ladder and looked over. "No, he's not," he called back. "He's not even cracked in one shiver. Mr. Joker!" he cried. "How are you?"

"Fine," said the clown. "Never better. You know what? It's soft on this side! Wait a minute." He stood on his head and promptly fell over. "See! Not a break, let alone a crack. It's marvelous. I don't know what this red stuff on the ground is but I love it."

M. Andrew tumbled about in wild abandon, turning handsprings and cartwheels. Then he stopped suddenly and shouted, "I haven't stiffened up! Not a bit of it! Come over and see!"

Those of you who are used to greenery being green may wonder what the "red stuff" was. But of course in the Quadling country there isn't any greenery, just reddy. Virtually all the trees and bushes and grass are red. In fact, *everything* is shades of red except, rather unaccountably, inside the dainty china country, where it appeared to be mostly white. Now the sight of so much cheerful redness fairly bemused the Clown as he gazed around him while some of his compatriots made their way to the top of the wall.

When quite a little group had got straddling the wall the Churchwarden and the Chieftain pulled up the china rope ladder and let it down on the outer, Quadling side. Then they joined the clown, even the little purple dog, whom someone had

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thoughtfully lifted over. His name was Purpupplio—usually called “Purp.”

“Isn’t it grand, this red stuff!” said the clown, boldly pulling up a handful of grass.

“Oh, take care, sir!” cried the Princess. “You don’t want to spoil the decorations.”

“I think, you know,” said the churchwarden, “these things are growing. And I think that material is called ‘grass’—and it will grow again.”

““Grow’?” echoed everybody. “What’s that?”

For in the Dainty China Country nothing grew. Everything was just as it was: fixed and shiny and brittle and unchanging.

The churchwarden had read a few china books and he was able to explain at least some of the strange phenomena the china people encountered as they strayed away into a fascinating red woods—which consisted of course mostly of redwoods.

The vast trees totally dwarfed the tiny pottery people, who indeed were no bigger than the smallest dwarfs to start with. When they had got around behind the first redwood tree they could no longer see their white china wall.

Soon they were hopelessly lost.

The day when Lurabelle Ladybug flew to the lake was perfect in every way. There were soft balmy breezes, plenty of sunshine, and a faint odor of orange blossoms drifting over all. As she approached the lake the first thing she saw was a large white stately swan teaching her little yellow cygnets to follow her around in a circle and to hold their heads in the regal manner of all swans.

One little baby swan seemed to be getting very tired and lagged behind the others, so Mrs. Gloria Swan gracefully ducked under water beneath the weary little one and came up carrying him on her back between her wings.

"How clever of you," said Lurabelle, swooping low over the charming family scene. "I never would have thought of doing that, even if I could swim."

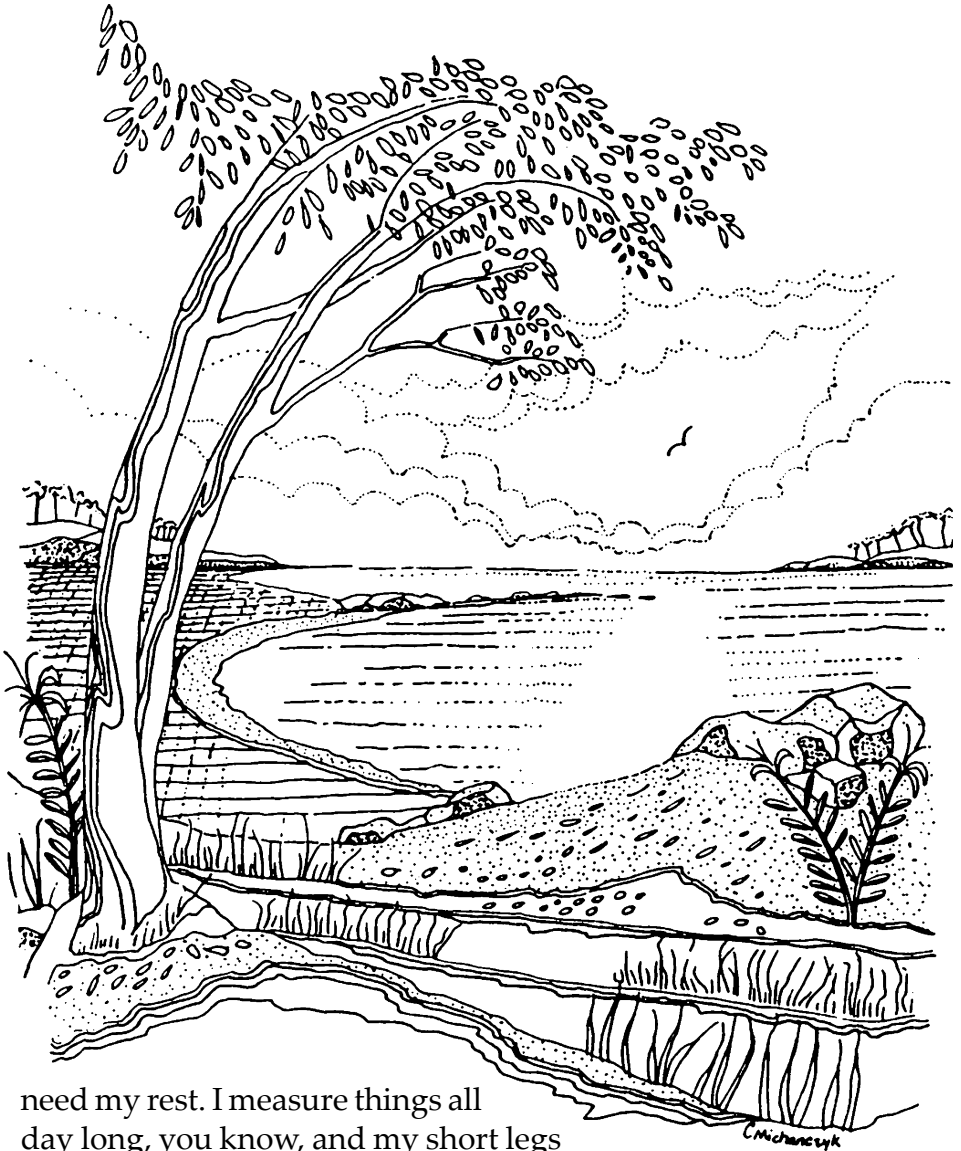
"One can't," said Gloria Swan, "be too careful. When I take my children into the water I must keep close watch to protect them from all kinds of dangers. While they are so tiny some larger creatures consider them a tasty meal."

Just then Eureka the pink kitten came strolling along the nearby shore. She watched the swans with interest for a little while. 'I think, if I tried, I could catch a baby swan—just for fun,' she said to herself. "I wouldn't hurt him, of course. I'd just hold him between my paws and listen to him talk. But then, I detest getting my fur wet, and Mrs. Swan would probably give me a terrible beating with her wings. It's not really worth the effort. No, I think I'll look for my old pal Tim Inchworm instead and have some more fun with him."

Quick as a flash Timothy's psychic mind, away off under the hibiscus bushes, picked up Eureka's thoughts and they brought him wide awake where he lay among the lush leaves. "Oh, no! Not again!" He shuddered, remembering their last go-round. "I must reason with her. Perhaps I can reach her by thought waves."

'Eureka, dear Eureka,' he thought with all his mental strength. 'Please leave me alone. I'm not even half your size, and I do

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need my rest. I measure things all day long, you know, and my short legs get very tired. To get your exercise you can run and jump and climb trees and chase butterflies. You really don't need me to bat around the way you did the other day.'

The pink kitten at the lakeside, suddenly struck motionless as she became aware of the inchworm's thoughts said to herself. "That's strange. I didn't even know that worm had a brain, let

alone feelings. What an awful cat he must think me.'

'Of course I'll leave you alone,' she telepathed back to him. 'I wouldn't really hurt you for the world. Now that I know you have feelings I'll never play cat and worm with you again.'

Comforted by the pink kitten's message Timothy Inchworm settled down on his bed of moss and twigs and was soon lost again in meditation and dreaming.

Meanwhile pretty Bettina Butterfly had been flitting hither and yon from one blossom to another. Presently she noticed Lurabelle Lady-beetle perched beside the lake.

"Hello there," she said and waved a wing at Lurabelle. "You must be new around here. I haven't seen you before."

"That's right," said the ladybug. "This is only my second day here and I think I've already fallen in love with the place."

"Have you met everyone already?" asked Bettina. "Well, of course you haven't met me yet. I'm Bettina Butterfly. My friends call me 'Bettina' for short. You can too, if you like."

"Bettina," said Lurabelle. 'That sounds all right,' she reflected, and aloud went on to introduce herself and to answer the butterfly's original question. "Let's see now; I've met the Reverend Foldinglegs P. Mantis and Timothy Inchworm—and then I've seen or heard about others. I know, for instance, that that's Mrs. Gloria Swan out there on the lake, and a little while ago I noticed a pink kitten on the lake shore just here. I understand she's a holy terror. And then there has been mention of a big fat green thing who spoils the poinsettia leaves—"

"Oh, that's Clara Caterpillar," said Bettina nonchalantly; "you don't need to worry about her. What about Stella Stick-Insect?"

"Why, no, I hadn't even heard about Miss or Mrs. Stella. Is she nice?"

"Mmm, so-so," admitted the butterfly. "I'm invited to a soiree at her place tomorrow. Want to go along?"

Lurabelle was thrilled to be getting into the social swim so soon in her new home region and accepted with alacrity. "Is it far?" she asked.

"Oh, around on the other side of the lake," informed the

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butterfly. "But you're a good flier, aren't you?"

"For short spurts," answered the lady-beetle. "If I can just stop and rest a moment between dashes..."

"Oh, that's all right. We'll follow the shore route so you can light when you want to. I can always sip a little nectar while I wait. It's all garden around here."

"Splendid," concluded Lurabelle Ladybug. "Would you like to call for me at home in good time to get there?" And she gave the pink butterfly her new address.

The china people set out on their expedition with a vengeance.

As it happened, they never did find the way back to their great wall but at least they had presence of mind enough to keep together. After some hours of fruitless wandering they stopped and took counsel.

They elected the Churchwarden their president and made a virtue of necessity. What they had posited more or less in jest became their business in earnest: they would search the wide world over to find some strong magic to solve their problems at home, or at any rate some strong glue to stick their church back together again.

Before long they came out of the red redwood wood and that in itself was an achievement. The red light of evening was darkening fast and then night was upon them. The china people didn't mind about that. They never had to sleep, or even could! The darkness did inhibit progress a little but on the other hand they had discovered that tripping over things and falling down did them little damage. The ground was soft and resilient everywhere, even on the dirt roads they sometimes crossed. This softness was a great marvel to them, who had never seen anything in their whole existence that was not hard and shatterable.

"What if we could get some of this wonderful stuff—" mused the china charwoman, "'grass', you call it?—to grow in our country? Then living might not be quite so hazardous there."

"Alas," regretted the Churchwarden, recalling his reading. "Nothing can grow on a china surface. It appears that somehow for things to grow there has to be free connection through to the deep soil below. It all has to do with the rain falling and elements in the ground getting converted into the substance of flesh and plant-fibre. Very complicated."

"Thank goodness for our own clean permanent gleaming substance," sighed all the Chinas with satisfaction.

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"But still it *would* be nice with something soft underfoot at home. Is there nothing that is soft but yet doesn't need rain and soil and things to function?"

"I've heard of something called 'rubber'," said the warden, "but it must be a magic material. Once it exists it seems to be stable, resists dampness and rough treatment, needs no upkeep. But it does have a drawback. It will burn."

"Then that's the stuff for us!" cried the Clown, "because fire is a thing we have absolutely no occasion for in our china land."

"Let's away!" cried the Chambermaid and the Chieftain with enthusiasm, "to find some magical rubber!"

That proved a bit harder to do than to say. The party traveled for many days, among hills, along streams, across meadows and marshes. Being so small it took them much longer than it would have done for fleet flesh animals or even man. They avoided roads, where they might be seen by possibly fault-finding travelers, but one afternoon the lie of the land obliged them to come out into the open at a crossroads in a melancholy region of heath and bracken.

A weatherbeaten wooden sign hanging from a crossarm post creaked in the wind and caught their attention. "The Old Magicity Shop" read out the churchwarden. The chinas' fate was sealed.

But *how* charming. The gingerbread roof of the little old wattled cottage hung nearly to the ground. The bottle-glass windows bulged in the bay, and behind them could be hauntingly dimly made out things that glowed alluringly in the evening halfflight.

The Chieftain strained on tiptoe to reach the bell-pull, then far away somewhere they could hear a tinkling of fairy bells. The china princess turned to look at the west where the last sun threw into radiance a few beautiful scurrying clouds: white and yellowy orange, but dark grey in their centers. Perhaps there was something significant in her gesture. Then she turned to follow the others into the shop.

Behind the time-worn wooden counter grinned slyly an old-

fashioned magician with the obligatory crooked nose and long knobby fingers. He was dressed in a sorcerer's robe with moon and stars on it and wore a tall black pointed conjuring hat. Though in fact he might only dispense magic over a counter he looked as if he was prepared to *work* magic.

"Oh, good evening," said the china churchwarden. "We were passing and noticed your shop. As it happens, we're in the market for one or two magical items. I wonder: do you have any rubber?"

"Rubber?" cried the shopman in a creaky voice. He was startled. "But this is a magic shop. We scarcely stock anything as mundane as rubber."

The churchwarden in confusion didn't like to confess that somewhere someone had blundered in his/her assumptions about rubber. "Well, then, glue?" he hastened to substitute. "Heavy-duty, structural, *magic* glue, of course, or possibly cement."

"For what would you be requiring it?" asked the wonder-dispenser. He didn't often get calls for glue.

"We have a church that was demolished by a huge flesh lion's tail. It's too big an operation for our local glue-mender. We need something more large-scale, with scaffolding and the proper tools and then a team of workmen to carry out the job."

"Well, I do—very occasionally—farm out work on commission. Let me see now." The shopkeeper took down from a shelf a heavy ledger and leafed among the parchment pages. "'Scaffolding', I suppose;" he muttered. "Now then: 'rituals'... Rivette, Aunt'... 'robots'... 'Rose Kingdom'... S—S... 'Rosicrucians'... 'Rubber World'—say, they might have something for you, after all... 'runes'..'Sacrifices, Inc.'... 'saints'... 'Satan'..."

Meanwhile the china folk were examining with fascination the wares displayed in bins and on shelves about the shop. The Chinaman pulled the strap of a big red-and-silver-wrapped cracker and a host of tiny goblins boiled out of the device and with hideous though faint screeches flew on bat wings to the

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cobwebby upper corners of the room and hung there, gibbering. The Charwoman took hold of a broom that immediately began to waltz, with sweeping gestures, to the tune of Dukas' great work. And the counter-man glanced up from his researches just in time to glimpse the china child picking up a big white flit-gun mechanism from a display table.

"Oh, have a care! Have a care!" fair screamed the clerk, dropping the Suppliers' Catalogue. "That's the demagicifier!!"

But it was too late. The knee-pantsed boy pushed the plunger and a cloud of white spray, of a heavenly fragrance, shot from the gun and quickly pervaded the air. The china people all stopped in attitudes of interest and amazement.

When the spray cloud cleared in a few minutes the people were still staring in wonder and delight. Even thirteen years later they were still doing it.

"Tcht, tcht," said the shopman as he went around gathering up the little figures and arranging them tastefully on shelves. "I *tried* to warn them." He picked up the china child, which still clutched the big white demagicifier. "I'll just let him carry on holding it," he decided. That would help to keep the instrument from being operated by any other too-curious visitors who might drop in. He reached for the china Chihuahua and gave it a polish with his coat sleeve. That piece he determined to place in the show window. It was so charming it was sure to attract customers.

The engaging but at present somewhat distracted little lady-beetle was flying along anxiously. She had lingered too long at the party of Stella Stick-Insect and now she was afraid she might not get home by dark. But the conversation had been *so* stimulating and the refreshments (aphids in aspic so delicious)! They had got on the topic of names and nomenclature and both the ladybug and her hostess had complaints about their own names. Neither was satisfied.

"Oh, 'Stella' is all right," admitted the partygiver with a moue, "but 'stick-insect'; that isn't a name, it's a description!"

"Nut, my dear, it's so distinguished with a hyphenated name," protested Lurabelle Ladybug, "like, say, 'Fitch-Worthington' or 'Sackville-West'. At least, so I've heard."

"I think it's just awkward," disagreed her hostess. "Like with the term 'United States'. That's not a real *name*—that is to say, like 'Spain' or 'Arabia'; it's a descriptive label, and the proof is that you can't form the necessary associate words from it. You can say 'Arab' or 'Spaniard' but you can't say 'United Statesman'. And what about an adjective? 'United Statesly'? or 'United Statesish'? No such thing. And the same with 'stick-insect'. Why, even 'louse' has 'lousy' and 'grub' has 'grubby'—but you can't say 'stickinsecty'. No, it's tiresome!"

"At least," consoled the lady-beetle, "people know what your name *is*. What about me? In those same United States you mention I'm called a 'ladybug' while in England the word's 'ladybird' but neither is any good really because I'm not what the English consider a bug nor the Americans a bird!"

"At least you are an insect," affirmed Mme. Stella. "The poor spiders can't even say that. Perhaps you'd better settle for 'lady-insect'...?"

"As you do with 'stick-insect'? Hmm..."

But then our heroine noticed the angle of the sun and got in a hurry to say her adieux. Lady-beetles are rarely seen at night and that's because they do need daylight to be able to fly

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efficiently. So now Lurabelle Ladybird (on balance she decided she liked “bird” better than “bug”; there *was* that distasteful overtone of “*bedbug*” about the latter!) flew off into the sunset.

Yet speed as she might she was benighted. In the last blue of evening she could just see to make her way in among three waving straws ahead. She’d simply have to make do with that harborage for the night. How annoying. Still, there was nothing she particularly had to do at home on the other side of Lake (actually, pond) Quad. She gripped a straw and settled herself for sleep.

That was odd. The straw—or wiry stalk of grass—was moving. Oh, not simply bending in the evening breeze. Actually being transported from place A to place E! Lurabelle opened her eyes and strained to see. No good; too dark. But the three straws, the lady-beetle herself, and the ground whereon they rested were definitely in transit! Was it an earthquake? If so, it was the gentlest, most continuously on-going one she’d ever been in.

Then she heard a voice. The ground spoke. “Are we nearly there?” it said.

“There’?” replied a second voice at some remove. It sounded curiously like a cat’s speech! “We’ve just got started!”

“Oh,” said Lurabelle’s moving firmament.

“You’re not tired, are you, Woozy?” asked a third and solicitous-sounding voice.

“Oh, no. Just bored.”

“Well, let’s talk then,” said yet a fourth voice. “That’ll pass the time.”

“That’s a good idea,” said number three. “Won’t you tell us a story, Woozy?”

“Oh!” After a slight pause, “Story-telling’s not really my line.”

“I for one would like to hear more about Ojo’s quest. Was the boy allowed to go on it in the end?”

“Go on his own quest?!” said one of the cat voices again. “Well, I should hope so. That’d be the day!”

“When do they start out?”

“Tomorrow.”

“And which way will they go?” Toby (yes, it was he) rather hoped it would be in the same direction as his own party was heading, i.e., south. Otherwise he didn’t see how they were going to be able to “help” much.

“Into the yellow country: the Winkies’. Ojo’s got to tear the wing off a yellow butterfly to complete his magic spell.”

Lurabelle Ladybird was so shocked at rearing this announcement that she lost her grip and fell right off the Woozy’s tail into the deep grass below.



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c h a p t e r

e i g h t

Cats can see in the dark. That was fortunate. So can dogs to a large extent. Even woozies can when they put their minds to it. Our friends had waited 'til late afternoon to make their getaway from the Palace of Magic. When Lake Quad had been circumnavigated and the lights of the city left behind they were glad of their see-ability in darkness. They hurried along and had covered many miles before something rather awful happened.

They suddenly heard the loudest crack of thunder any of them had ever experienced. Just moments later the night sky opened and dumped a small lake on them. The cats spat furiously but swam. So did the Woozy, after a fashion. The china dog said "Glub, glub" and sank like lead. So did the lake as well as it dispersed itself out across the countryside in a relatively few minutes.

Fortunately the first pinkish grey of dawn was just about to appear and that helped the friends to find each other in no more than an hour of scrambling through the rich red mud the cloudburst-had left behind. Before they found each other completely, however, they found someone else. This was an inordinately tall lean man, really just little short of a giant, who came striding along the sticky red gully that had formerly been a country road.

The Pink Kitten noticed him first and paused in her licking operations. It was fairly hopeless amidst the mud but she was trying her best to clean herself up. Eureka was always rather fastidious. "Mew," she said, and the giant looked down.

"Another casualty?" said the man in a voice like Abraham Lincoln. He paused and took out of his pockets some hedgehogs and hares and things he had already rescued from watery graves. Now that it was beginning to dry out a little he could safely let them go. "I'm sorry," he said.

The kitten was surprised. "What about?" she wondered.

"This sudden fall of water," he explained. "I'm afraid it's my fault."

“Oh? How so?”

“Let me introduce myself. I’m Rod Litenin. True to my name I seem to attract lightning—and other things. I see the inside of a lot of rain clouds in a year.”

As she studied the towering figure, Eureka could see that his head and hands were covered with scars and burn marks. His shapeless clothes were patched and frayed too. They were also wringing wet. He was pretty much of a mess to look at. And yet somewhere the cat sensed a strength.

“That’s too bad,” sympathized Eureka. “Still, I guess we’ll survive. Have you got time to help me find my friends? One of ‘em’s here.” She indicated a lump of red clay beside the road; that would be Toby. “But the others seem to have got washed away.”

“As I say: my fault. Sure; it’s the least I can do.”

With his tallness Rod Litenin would spy out a very much wider range of terrain than could the low-built kitten and it wasn’t long before he found the Woozy and the Glass Cat condoling with each other at the edge of a copse.

After thanking Rod for their rescue the Woozy said, “What’s that haunting fragrance?” He seemed to have a thing about haunting fragrances, and often they were ones not suitable for presentation in the drawing-room.

“You mean like burning rubber?” said Litenin shamefastly.

“Mm, that’s it. With just a suggestion of sauerkraut thrown in. Actually it’s quite fascinating,” and the Woozy moved near for a closer sniff. The glass cat said nothing. She couldn’t smell anyway.

“I’ll tell you,” vouchsafed Rod as they made their way back to the road where the others waited. “I had a store where I offered everything in the world made out of rubber. In fact, I called it ‘Rubber World’. Then, as usual, lightning struck it and it all went up in smoke—and I do mean smoke. I struggled quite a while to rescue something from the flames but when it looked like the whole place was going—I came away. Since then I’ve been

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smelling like burnt rubber.” The man was being a bit disingenuous here—but more of that later.

The animals could care less about Rod’s queer smell. Either they couldn’t smell it (glass cat and china dog) or else they didn’t mind. And otherwise they found him an amiable gent. Kind to small animals and that.

They sat in a row on the roadbank and tried to dry out in the dawn sun. Now that the violent storm had had its go it looked like going to be a fair day. Rod Litenin wiped off Toby and Bungle with a big wet bandanna, and then they were all right. The kitten and woozy took a bit longer. Then Toby said, “What about you, Mr. Litenin? You’re still soggy wet.”

“Oh, just call me ‘Rod’,” said the man. “It’s quicker than ‘Litenin’. But don’t mind about me being wet. I never dry out completely. That accounts for the cabbage smell: mouldy clothes. They don’t get dry before I get overtaken by another flood or what-have-you.”

“Gee,” said the china dog. “Thunderstorms, fires, floods. Do they just happen to you?”

“Not ‘just’, I guess,” Rod admitted, “but mostly. Don’t know why it is. It’s always been that way. But what? Me worry?”

“Nice attitude—if you can keep it up.”

“The way I see it, you’ve got to. If you let disasters depress you, you’re got at double: the physical misery of whatever happens plus the mental suffering laid on top. There’s only one thing that is real cause for distress and that’s loss of health. Here in Oz we can never die, so even bad health is not a complete calamity. So, why worry?”

“I think I differ with you,” said the Pink Kitten. “What about shame, disgrace, dishonor? Those are real reasons to grieve, and they’re nothing to do with your health.”

“That’s easy,” said Rod. “You just never do anything dishonorable or shameful, so you’re safe.”

“But what if you’re accused of something disgraceful anyway?! It hurts even if it isn’t true.” Eureka spoke from experience.

"One can't waste time with the slanders of malicious people," pronounced the wanderer. "If *you* know you haven't betrayed your honor nobody else's accusation matters. A great poet said it." He took from his pocket a little battered waterlogged leather-bound book. "'To thine own self be true'... That's called 'morality'."

"'Morality'?" The animals hardly knew what he was on about but it was nice there in the hedgerow under the mild morning breeze and they could afford to sit on a bit and natter.

"Yes," Rod Litenin pontificated. "Morals are ways of behavior you accept as being right for yourself; and morality is simply sticking to those ways. That's easy enough to do. If you think lying is all right, then it isn't immoral for you to lie. If you think dancing on Sunday is wrong, then it's immoral for you to dance on Sunday. It's all being true to yourself: that's morality."

But even the glass cat was aroused at such heresy. "Morality, schmorality," she puffed. "Some things are just *wrong*: as you say, lying—"

"To spare somebody's feelings? when the issue is trifling?"

"Killing—"

"A chicken for Sunday dinner?"

"Stealing."

"A loaf of bread when you're starving?"

"Cheating someone who trusts you!"

The tall stranger was silent. *Some* things really were unforgivable! and every right-thinking person knew it.

Shattered by the awful news she had fortuitously been auditor of, Lurabelle Lady-Insect lay nearly prostrate throughout the night and lost valuable time. It was noon the next day before, flying erratically, she got herself home to the Snow Queen hibiscus bush, mumbling over and over to herself: "How could they do it?... I thought deathlessness was the rule in Oz—but that would be worse than death... Animals themselves, and yet they could talk so flippantly of pulling somebody's wing off... Of course none of them were winged creatures.... Two were cats, I'm almost sure—but I've never heard voices like the others had... Yes, cats are heartless—besides being wingless. Timothy Inchworm is my witness to that... What should I do? We can't just let them go on and actually rip off a wing... The ring-leader is a villain called 'Ojo.' But how can I find out where..."

The said Mr. Inchworm noticed his neighbor flying disorientedly around in circles. 'Almost as if one of her wings were incapacitated,' thought Timothy, and he called to her.

"Oh, Timothy; thank goodness," gasped Lurabelle, coming in on a wing and a prayer for a landing beside him. "I've just had the most awful experience." She outlined the nature of the episode. "Apparently there are whole expeditions organized for small-game hunting. This one is going out after butterfly wings. I suppose they nail them up on their walls as trophies. But the point is: what should I do?! to try to save some unwitting insect from a dreadful fate."

"Do?" said Timothy, thoughtfully chewing a mouthful of leaf. "I hardly see how one ladybug—"

"I'm saying 'ladybeetle' now," Lurabelle broke in gently. In her distress she still had not forgotten conclusions provisionally come to in her talk with Stella Stick-Insect.

"Very well—how one ladybeetle, on her own, can do anything at all. At least it doesn't seem they're gunning for ladybeetles... yet."

"Oh, that's egocentric," dismissed Lurabelle, in psychiatric

terms. "I'm other-directed. Always have been, rather. I can't be happy if I know people are going around tearing the wings off my fellow insects, even if not ladybeetles."

"Admirable, I'm sure," approved Timothy. "Well, I suppose you could mount a counter-expedition—to try to put a stop to their marauding."

"Ye-es." Miss Ladybeetle was thoughtful. "I don't know about my organizing ability though. I'd have to have help."

"I'm awful sorry I can't be of more assistance," regretted the inchworm. "I'd be useless to an aerial task force—which I suppose is what's indicated—"

"I must consult the Rev. Mr. Mantis," decided Lurabelle. "He's reliable, don't you think?"

"Maybe a bit stiff and wooden in his manner," opined Timothy, "but essentially sound, I'm sure."

"And of course I must warn Bettina—"

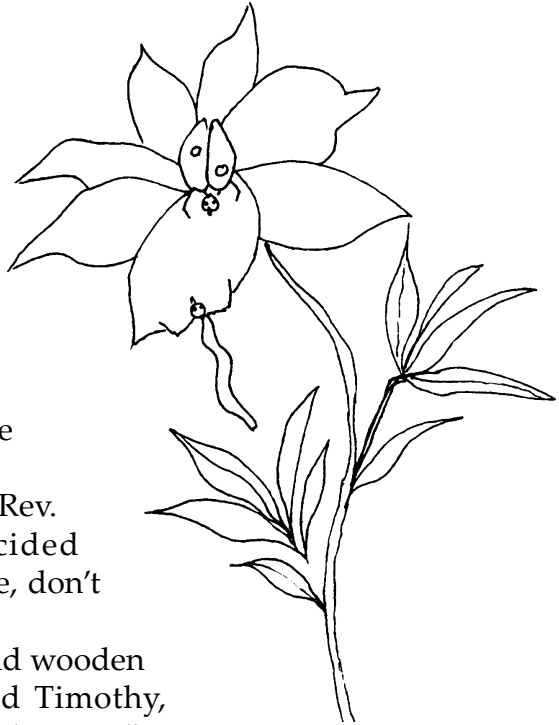
"Oh, you've met her, have you? Isn't she the flightiest thing!"

"Well, in this case flight is just what's wanted. Naturally Bettina herself isn't at risk, being pink—"

"Yes, we're just near the Quadling border here, where things start being red," supplied Timothy.

"Jut the butterfly will be concerned for her own kind, I know, even those who are yellow. I'll go and see her. Anyway, I want to thank her for introducing me to Stella."

When she had rested a while and browsed on a few aphids



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(suddenly Lurabelle felt guilt-stricken; after all, aphids were people too, with their own hopes and dreams), she took her courage in hand and flew off. She knew that Bettina, though of no fixed address, like to hang around the rosery down near the lake. Before long she found her, backed into the corner of a Mrs. McGready by the Rev. Mr. Mantis, who was giving her a talking-to about her light-living ways.

"Oh, sir," Miss Ladybeetle interrupted, alighting near the pair, "I want your advice—and Miss Butterfly's help! There's something more serious afoot, I fear, than differing views as to codes of behavior. If what I've heard is correct there are gangs of ruffians abroad bent on tearing the wings off living creatures. I'm so upset I don't know which way to turn, but I feel I must do something. It just never crossed my mind that such things are allowed in Oz!"

"No more they are," assured the reverend gentleinsect with appropriate gravitas. "Our country's queen, renowned Ozma, specifically forbids it. But tell us what you've heard."

At first during the recital Bettina Butterfly was inclined to fidget and flutter but when she heard that the goal of the trophy hunters was her very own kinsinsects she abruptly grew serious and even displayed traits of leadership. "*Yellow butterflies!*" she ejaculated. "That would be the Clouded Sulfurs—though of course their less numerous cousins, the Uncloudeds, will be at risk too: perhaps even more so. I'll round up us Roseates and Shocking Pinks and we'll be off in a body to spread the warning."

"Splendid, Miss Bettina!" cried Mr. Mantis, delighted at the quantum leap toward responsibility his parishioner had taken.

"But oh, be sudden, Bettina!" urged Lurabelle. "I've already stupidly lost so much time. From what I overheard that safari is starting out today. Why, they may already have encountered some of your relations and wrought their fell purpose upon them."

"Oh, I'll fly fast," promised the butterfly. "We can be in the Winkie country by evening and meeting the first fritillaries."

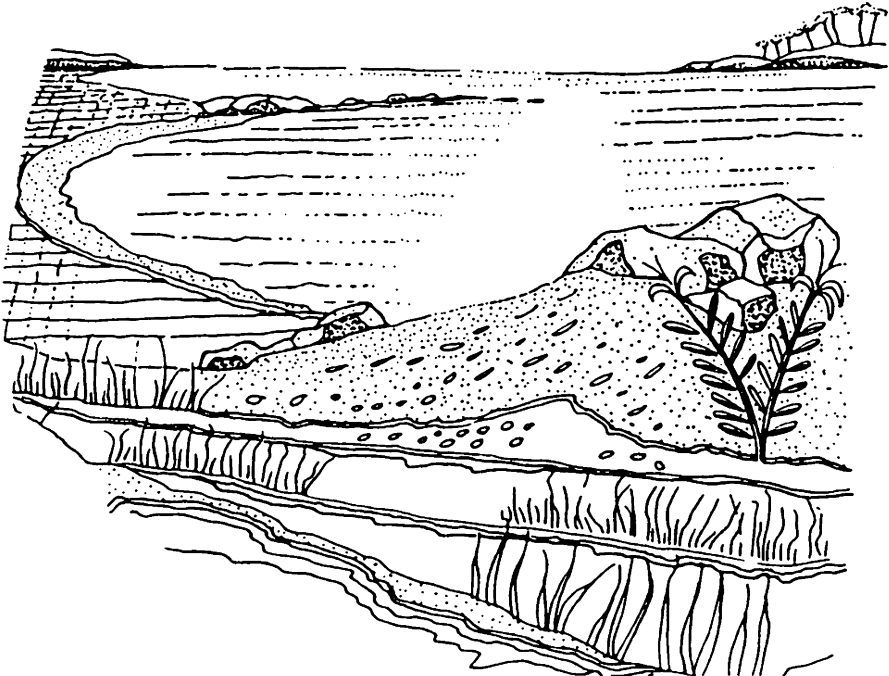
They'll spread the word to the others: to be on guard and take cover."

The ladybug bewailed her tininess. "I wish I could go along! but I'm afraid I couldn't keep up. But I'll tell you what: I'll open a liaison office here, to co-ordinate the plan of campaign. We won't stop at warning butterflies. Mr. Mantis! you'll want to help, won't you?"

"Oh, surely," said the minister, "but I'm not sure what—"

"Spread the word to the grass! It will tell it to the trees and they will tell the birds and bees and everyone will know! Meanwhile, I'll—Oh, there's Gloria Swan! I've got to let her know. Forward, friends! We still may not be too late...!"

And the little red-winged Samaritan flew boldly off across the waters of Lake Quad on her errand of mercy.



When the animal quartet had explained their mission and Rod Litenin had decided to join them, the party, moving rapidly, arrived by mid-afternoon on a wide desolate moor. A violent wind was blowing (par for the course when Rod was present) and for greater security he had distributed the animals in his big pockets and was outright carrying in his arms the bigger, cuddlable (though so squarez) Woozy, which from time to time stuck up its head to lick the man's scarred face with its square leathery tongue. Rod's stride was phenomenal and he confidently expected to reach the Dainty China Country by nightfall.

"Hello," he said, sighting the chromium pole that had replaced an old swinging sign that had hung there thirteen years earlier. On top of the pole was a stainless-steel disc inscribed "AntMagCoop". After reading it Rod was just as wise as before and he moved nearer to the building at the crossroads to get an idea of what its purpose was. The animals, hearing his "hello", stuck their heads out of his pockets to see what was what.

The quaint old shop with its drooping eaves was as if gone with the wind. In its place was a flat-roofed stucco-plastered box with no windows. Over the square entry way was repeated the legend "AntMagCoop". In addition there was a sign on the wall reading: "Attention! Do not enter if afflicted by magic!"

That brought the party up short. Rod was very well aware of the magic characteristics of at least three of his four passengers and had no intention of introducing them into a problematical situation. "What about it, friends? Do we look in here? or give it a miss?"

Toby had seen the sign and said, "It *would* be interesting to know what 'AntMagCoop' means. But otherwise..."

"Go ahead in, Rod," urged the Glass Cat. "You on your own. The rest of us will wait out here. We wouldn't want to

go against their prohibition, naturally," she ended ironically. For in fact all four of the animals were "afflicted by magic" to a certain degree. Three of them wouldn't be alive at all but for that nowadays forbidden entity and even Eureka, who was originally a natural cat, was only pink and kittenish by virtue of a little hexing. Left to nature she'd be an aging white cat by now.

Litenin hauled up the creatures and set them down on the ground in a row and they looked on with interest as he pushed aside the swing door and disappeared into the building.

Inside all was painted plywood and chromium. Banks of uniform numbered drawers lined the walls. There was no display window but on the steel-topped sales counter stood a little china dog with a large head. It looked strangely incongruous and that chiefly because it was the only object of any color in the room. It was purple. Behind the counter stood a blonde white-faced young woman in a white laboratory gown. "What do you wish?" she said with a non-committal scowl.

"Wish'?" said Rod Litenin, bemused. "Oh, lots of things. That I had a new suit of clothes—and that my rubber shop could be rebuilt—and that my friends will find what they're looking for."

"No wishes granted here," stated the woman crisply. "This is the Anti-Magic Co-operative. Didn't you read the sign? But if you've got any wishes you want *canceled*, we can oblige."

"Anti-Magic, eh? What does that cover?" enquired the customer.

"Everything magic, of course. If you have anything that's contaminated by charms, bring it in here and we'll disinfect it for you. It's part of Queen Ozma's campaign to exterminate wonderworking in this country, root and branch."

"Oh, like that, hey? I hadn't heard," apologized Rod. "Tell me more, please, if you've got time."

The clerk seemed mollified by his ingratiating tone and relaxed a millimeter. "Why, when the new girl ruler assumed

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power her first act was a decree doing away with the practice of magic in the fairyland except by herself and her Chief Commissar, O.A. Glinda, formerly a witch—so-called.”

“O.A.’,” repeated the visitor. “What do those letters stand for?”

“Occult Adept. A highly responsible post. On Ozma’s orders Glinda has converted all the old-fashioned magic shops to *anti*-magic dispensaries such as this one. We give out preparations for eradicating magic in environments that may be infested with it.”

“What about enchantments? You got anything that’s good against them? I’ve got a couple of pesky transformations I’d like to clear up.”

“Here!” said the young woman and yanked open a drawer behind the counter. “What form do you need? Pills? Sprays? Maybe in liquid form? But be careful; this is powerful stuff. However, we’re keen to eradicate any effects still left from the time of the old regime.”

“I tell you what,” said Rod confidentially. “Let me have a carton of each kind. I know of various old spells hanging on; some may need one treatment, some another. I think I can get rid of a lot of magic for you.”

The clerk almost essayed a smile. “We’ll be glad of any co-operation on the part of clientèle. I’ll wrap these for you.”

“Oh, yes, please. I—er, don’t suppose those preparations can affect anything unless applied directly?”

“No. The emballage is air-, water-, and gas-proof. Use precaution, as I say, once they’re opened though.” The attendant handed across the parcel. “Here,” she added as an afterthought and offered the little china dog. “A bonus for collaborating customers. We’re getting rid of all the junk—er, sorry; curios that had collected up in the old booth on this site.”

With polite noises Litenin moved toward the exit. Then he turned back. “You wouldn’t,” he said, “—er, have any remedy for—well, offensive body smells?”

“Caused by magic?” asked the girl.

“Well, no; entirely — congenital, I guess you’d say. Natural. From birth.”

“Sorry. I can’t help you.”

When the customer had gone the clerk did a bit of discreet snorting and snuffling to rid her nostrils of that customer’s strange effluvium.

"Yoo-hoo, Mrs. Swan!" called Lurabelle Ladybeetle, circling about the head of the queen of the lake but not *too* near. She supposed swans mostly lived upon things they found on, in, or under the water but she wasn't absolutely sure they were above snapping at airborne creatures.

The swan jerked back her head, turned it, and fixed the revolving insect with a stern black eye. "Who calls my name?"

"We spoke briefly the other day," reminded the beetle. "I was admiring your wisdom and aptitude in the rearing of your young."

"Oh, yes," acknowledged Madame Swan.

"Something rather awful has come up," reported the ladybug. "It's a matter I feel concerns closely all us winged persons." She began to tell her tale when Gloria Swan broke in to say,

"If you're having trouble flying and recounting at the same time, you may alight on my head. That will be quite all right."

"Oh, thank you," gasped the little red insect. Her flying *was* mostly limited to short whirring dashes and to do anything else at the same time made serious calls on her resources.

The swan drifted placidly, her head steadily erect, as Lurabelle related her adventure, and the cygnets coasted after her. Only when Miss Ladybeetle came to the punch line about the dastardly plot to tear off the wing of a living flier did Mrs. Swan rise on the water and flap her own wings threateningly.

"Obscene," she opined succinctly. "It must be put a stop to. What measures have you taken in hand?"

"I've notified everyone I know. I'm new here, you know; have hardly met anybody, but those few I've alerted. Bettina and the other butterflies are off at once, she promises, to rouse their yellow brethren and herd them to safety."

"That's not enough," declared the sear.. "Can butterflies fly fast enough to catch up and pass an expedition of that sort? so

as to warn their fellows who may be in the line of march. By the way, what does the safari group consist of?"

"Oh, the ring-leader is a criminal named 'Ojo', apparently a human boy. But they talked of 'they'; I don't know how many or of what races."

"Take the boy as the limiting element. They have no vehicles or riding animals to speak of here in Oz, so the pirate crew will presumably be walking. Butterflies can't go much faster—but swans can."

"Oh, Mrs. Swan, you don't mean—" started Lurabelle, thrilled.

"Not myself, naturally. I couldn't leave my babes. But my husband Swen is off somewhere on the lake. I'll have a word with him. There are not many creatures faster than swans when they get going. It's the wing span, you see."

"*Would you!?*" cried the ladybug. "How marvelous! What arrangement shall we make?"

"You'll want to start at once."

"Start? Me?" Lurabelle was taken aback. "Oh, well, yes, of course!" And she'd thought she was going to have to remain dully behind, womaning the liaison office! "I can be ready immediately."

"You can burrow in among Swen's neck feathers and ride perfectly safely," decreed Gloria. "Watch out for the children now, will you? Perch there on Cygney's head. Now you children behave! This lady-beetle's going to nanny you for a bit while I go find your dad. The two of us'll be back before you know it."

"Splendid," said Toby the china dog when he heard Rod Litenin's report.

The traveling party had moved off some distance from the AntMagCoop and sat down under a lonely tree. Unfortunately it was an elm and as soon as Rod sat under it it began to develop elm blight. However, it would probably stand as long as their conversation lasted.

"Now I'd like to propose that we go somewhere else," continued the dog. "Not to the China Country."

"Oh, not there?" said the others wonderingly.

"That was just somewhere to go out of interest really just curiosity," explained Toby. "But now we could have a goal of real significance."

"Do tell," urged his friend the kitten.

"These magic-canceling compounds Rod picked up. 'Think now what I would speak.'" (While in Rod's pocket Toby had been taking a look in the pocket *Shakespeare*.)

"Say on, my loving dog." The glass cat had had a peek at the same scene in the book!

"Where do we know of where they could use some demagicifying urgently?"

"Dr. Pipit's!" screamed the cat, and of course everything fell into place for everybody all at once.

If they had means to undo enchantments they could restore their friend Ojo's uncle to life and then the boy's quest was sure to have a happy outcome, even if not by his own achievement. This, of course, was what of Rod Litenin had had in mind when he elected to try the wares of the AntMagCoop.

At once the animals were all fire and flame to be off. By now Rod was such an intimate member of their group that they didn't even wonder very seriously if he would care to go along. Now they all looked at Bungle. With a cat's seven—or is it nine?—senses she would know in which direction her old home lay.

There was just one trifling incident as they got up from under

the elm tree and made ready to depart. That was as Rod was storing the demagicifiers in his capacious pockets. "Sorry, friends," he said to the animals. "No room for you now. But I'll pick up a croker sack, the next store we pass. And what'll I do with you?"

He addressed the little purple dog figurine (a sort of Boston bull if not a chihuahua, to judge by the illustration*, but the resemblance to life is not exact, Purp's head not being shown as noticeably large). This was the first the animals had seen of the new, if inanimate, member of the party, and they were delighted. Toby most, of course. "How extraordinary!" he cried. "He looks just like the picture in the book! So that means there are at least *three* of us china dogs in Oz!"

A faint loneliness that had oppressed the porcelain pug all his days (he now realized) began to blow away. This may even have been the start of a lessening of a slight melancholy that had been Toby's. "I wish I had a pocket. He could travel there," said the dog.

"Find a thinnish piece of rope," commanded the Woozy. "Or if there isn't any, bring a thickish piece of string. The little dog can ride on my back."

This was a happy solution to the problem and they all praised the Woozy for his cleverness. So they set off with a swing to find string—or anyway, with hope to find rope.

*See *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, chapter 20. Editor's note.

"It is with the greatest hesitation," said the Wizard of Oz, "that I bring up a delicate issue, Your Grace."

He was talking to the Sorceress Glinda, prepotent magic-worker and Ruler of the land of the Quadlings. Still now, six years after his final and permanent resettlement in Oz, the Wizard, O.Z. Diggs, was coming for weekly lessons in wizardry to the office of the good witch. He was getting to be very much of an adept at sorcery but still there were fine points that wanted perfecting. Besides, he had become fond, in the somewhat distant way that her rank dictated, of the wise and kind suzerain. He valued her as a confidante and especially now in these later years when at home in the Emerald City there was, by definition, no one to whom he could unburden himself on *all* topics.

"What would that be, my friend?"

"Well, umh—er. That is—" The Wizard uttered enough of such sensitive drawings-back to persuade the witch that his intentions were of the most honorable and then he came out with it. What it boiled down to was this: "Our esteemed regent, the Princess Ozma, has been a modest but very capable ruler for the land. 'Has been'. But now that experience has been added to her natural intelligence and prudence, some indeed, a great deal—of her modesty seems to be draining away. She shows signs of becoming well, I deplore to say—a tyrant. She's issuing decrees and prohibitions that have no sense to them. We have just now had a glaring example. Some time ago she promulgated a law that no one may pick a six-leaved clover, a perfect instance of her apparent wish to dictate the terms of life in Oz down to the smallest detail. What could be the value of such a law? Plants are not harmed by the occasional plucking of blossoms, twigs, or leaves, particularly the latter, which have no seed-bearing function. In this current case a harmless Munchkin lad had to spend a night in jail to expiate the 'crime' of picking such a leaf—"

"I wonder, Wizard," Glinda interceded, "if you do not do

our little Queen some injustice. Her rationale for the measure—”

The Wizard broke back in: “Indeed! Ozma stated that the law was aimed at persons intending to practise sorcery. It seems one particular and obscure charm calls for a six-leaved clover as an ingredient. But by the same logic she might outlaw all men, since a drop of oil from a man’s body (easily obtained by scraping the scalp and face of any male with a greasy complexion) is another component of that formula.”

“I’ve followed the case in the Book of Records, of course,” confirmed the sorceress. “‘Ojo’ I think the boy’s name is...”

“Ah me,” acknowledged Wizard Diggs, “Your Grace knows everything.”

“Hardly,” disclaimed the good witch with a smile.

“But there again,” resumed Diggs. “Princess Ozma is giving out that *she* knows everything. To that end she spends all day, what time she isn’t issuing new decrees or judging cases at law, sitting in front of the Magic Picture with her notebook, keeping an eye on everybody in the country. She’s had placards printed and posted up around the Emerald City saying ‘Big Sister is watching you.’^s”

“That does seem a bit supererogatory,” admitted the sorceress. She already knew of this development too, of course, but made no boast of it.

“Ozma is so formidably *just*,” went on the Wizard. “It’s getting quite frightening. Even in the folk mouth the word is that Princess Ozma is ‘just as just as she is powerful’ and everybody knows that she has total dictatorial power over the country, benevolent as it may be. But I’m afraid she complicates matters by making illegal so much that formerly was not legislated about. This prohibition on magic-working is perhaps the worst example. At a stroke dozens if not hundreds of amiable little magicians around the country are made criminals. And how meaningless and contradictory such a fiat: a fairyland without magic. If not a paradox, it certainly insures that the country

^sGeorge Orwell was later to make use of this device in his novel 1984.

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become as dull as well, Kansas, for instance.”

“There’s much in what you say, Mr. Diggs,” conceded the red witch. “I myself deplore the assumption that all unsupervised magic-workers are automatically going to perform *evil* magic. Although there were two or three fairly troublesome and malicious witches practising in Oz in former times, their influence was far outweighed by the effects of the good magic conjured up by any number of well-intentioned adepts. I at any rate never felt any compulsion to try to stamp out the use of magic—and I’ve been going along here at the old stand for a good many centuries now.”

“Just so, your grace,” acknowledged the Wizard of Oz. “Even I might be said to have merited stepping on in earlier times[§], but you most sensitively did nothing about it.”

“I never willfully tried to extend my influence outside the borders of my own realm,” admitted Glinda. “Unfortunately now, *within* that realm, I’ve been obliged—by another of Princess (well, she now prefers ‘Queen’) Ozma’s decrees—to outlaw all the colorful old magic shops and replace them with rather grim agencies for distributing antimagic.”

“There you are!” chimed in O.Z. Diggs, justified. “So what I would like to ask is: can anything be done about the change in our dear ruler? Just selfishly, I would like to have back the charming and unassuming companion of such adventures as that of the Fairy Queen* a few years back. Otherwise, I fear a development into a real reign of oppression here in the land of Oz if this pervasive and inflexible invasion of every area of life is to continue.”

“Let us keep the problem in mind,” suggested the red ruler, “and at every opportunity do what we can to soften the effects of the young princess’s stringencies. As a matter of fact, I do believe that in time a mellowing process will take place. Ozma is essentially a most decent individual.

“And now, shall we run through those routines for inducing sham transformations again?”

§See *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

*See *A Fairy Queen in Oz*. Editor’s notes.

The animal travelers (with human contingent) made good time speeding toward the northeast. With a bit of hustling all the creatures were able to keep abreast of the long-striding Rod Litenin except just poor stub-toed Toby and after a bit Rod simply picked him up and carried him permanently in the crook of his arm.

“That sore toe!” fumed Bungle. “I don’t care if it *is* traditional and beloved, I wish it could be cured.” Secretly the china pug did too.

Long after dark (and it was still only day one of their travels) the group approached the grounds of the Athletic Institute of Oz and crept under some lilac bushes for a kip (all those who *could* kip). They were already within the boundaries of the Munchkin land of Oz but they still had the whole of it to cross. Toby and Bungle whispered to each other through most of the night while the others slept.

The next day they got themselves ferried over the Munchkin River and without much conversation with the ferryman. Just as they had avoided meeting any of the students on the campus they skirted the Fiddlestick Forest, wanting to avoid entanglements that would hold them up in the accomplishment of their mission. At about noon that day they walked across the yellow brick road. It wasn’t *that* road that would lead them to the house of Dr. Pipt. Besides, clacking down the hard highway would have been hard on the feet of the Glass Cat and the China Dog. All the party preferred to keep to the comfort of natural blue grass under foot.

Bungle, with the memory of recent hazards in mind, took care to lead her companions out in a big arc around the man-eating plants, but that took valuable extra time and they only managed to get within the limits of the Blue Forest before night fell impenetrably. Rod was well used to sleeping rough and he got comfortable in a blue-nut thicket with the animals grouped around him for warmth—and despite the smell.

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Blue-nuts are not very nourishing but they have a wonderful ability to fill the stomach so one has a sensation of having fed well. In that respect they are rather like water hyacinths, which cattle can graze on to their bellies' continual repletion—until they drop down dead of starvation. The case was not so drastic here. The eaters in the party filled up on nuts night and morn, feeling sure of a more substantial snack once they reached the crooked magician's.

The wayfarers made their way up the path along the forest-girded mountainside and about midmorning came to the roomy blue house of Dr. Pipt, sorcerer, in its pleasant blue gardens. They knocked. And then they waited. "The mad old fellow probably has to untie his spoons," diagnosed Bungle the cat, when their waiting was prolonged.

"'Untie spoons'?" queried the human member of the party.

The glass cat had plenty of time while they waited to relate that the crooked magician when last seen had been hanging up his pots at the fire, preparatory to the laborious task of brewing another batch of his life-giving powder. For this work he stirred two cauldrons by hand and served another two with long stirring spoons tied to his feet.

But now at last they heard sounds within the lonely house. Dr. Pipt appeared delighted when he opened the door and saw who was there. Bungle was occupying the tall Rod Litenin's shoulder and when the magician cried, "Come to my arms, my beamish cat!", she leapt across. In his arms she actually purred, and then casually introduced her companions.

"Good news, doctor," she added. "We've got something here we think may cure those stone people of yours in a jiffy. Wanna try? You know the ones I mean: your wife and the old visitor, 'Nunkie'."

"Splendid, splendid!" said the creased and crumpled little man, who however seemed not abashed or depressed by his crippled condition. "What can it be? I wonder. Come in, come in."

The travelers needed no urging. It would be nice to be under

a roof again, even if in one case it was a roof one had lived under for a good many years and could be expected to be fed up with. But no, Bungle strolled about quite complacently and pointed out the sights to her traveling companions, while Dr. Pipt put an (extra) kettle on. There was much to be said and commented about.

Rod L. said, "Nice place you've got here."

The Woozy said, "Those are the statues I've heard so much about," and went to gaze with interest at the charming marble figures of the old man and the buxom Mrs. Pipt in the window embrasure.

The china dog said, "Please show the anti-magic packages, Mr. Rod."

The pink kitten said nothing but "The butter's spread too thick." She was on the kitchen table, checking the cold collation their host was hastily throwing together.

Dr. Pipt suddenly cried, "Oh, help! The pots are boiling over into the fire!" and rushed incontinently into his wide-windowed laboratory next door.

In a moment he returned with a puzzled expression. "No; that's queer. They weren't boiling over at all. I gave them a good stir. But there! I smell it again. Like burning rubber—and there is a good deal of latex in the powder-of-life mixture—"

He was turning worriedly toward the laboratory door again when Rod with easy grace said, "Don't worry, doctor. It's just me. My natural effluvium. Sorry about that. It's why I tend to stay away from people. With animals it's different. They don't seem to mind."

"Perhaps a bath?" suggested Pipt. "Fine big bathroom here. All modern cons. My wife insisted on them. Help yourself... We'll carry on with lunch afterwards."

"Say, that's mighty friendly of you," thanked Rod. "I don't mind if I do." It had been a week since he had had the treat of a bath in a brook. (Cloudburst shower baths with your clothes on didn't count.) A hot tub would be all the more enjoyable. Not that it would help his b.o. much, as well he knew.

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So Rod splashed—and even sang. He had a fine baritone, and a voice (as opposed to a breath) can't stink, so everybody who heard it could just enjoy.

Dr. Pipt, baching it now that his wife was just a knickknack and himself already an adept at preparing things in pots, now had time to cook up a pleasant nourishing dish of rice with blue peas and Indian corn from the garden, besides such frivolities as cake and pie trees, cream-puff bushes, butter-cups, and candy-tuft the Pipt garden grew mundane things like natural vegetables, for occasional serving as relief from all the desserts.

The life-size pug went about making the acquaintance, and regretting the lifelessness, of all the objets d'(in a sense)art the doctor had created in marble over the years. The house was cluttered with the bricabrac. There were the usual poultry, puppies, kittens, cage birds (now what use was a stone canary which, when living, had been yellow, weighed a hundred grams, and sang; now it was grey [with white veining], weighed a pound, and was mute), the odd mole, squirrel, and fox, and, for a more glamorous note, brownies, goblins, and both common and garden gnomes (the gardens as well were full of the latter). 'If only these were still alive,' sighed Toby to himself, 'what tales they might tell.' But there you were: art (of magic-working) imitated, in fact replaced, life—but scarcely successfully.

And Eureka, the Pink Kitten. She idly hunted for mice but found only marble ones. Then under a chair she observed a queer phenomenon. The floor boards were slowly heaving up and down in a regular fashion and squeaking in what almost seemed a meaningful way. She might have gone nearer and investigated further but she noticed a whitish powder spread along under the skirting board and took it for rat poison. No good sniffing at that! Instead, she quietly hissed her friend Bungle to her.

"What do you suppose that is?" she whispered in feline. "The floor vibrating that way. Think it's an earth tremor brought on by our friend Rod's proximity?"

"Might be at that," surmised the Glass Cat. "I guess it's about time for another of his little natural catastrophes." But then

Bungle caught sight of the whitish dust on the floor. "No, you nut!" she cried, but instantly shushed herself. "That's the remainder of the powder of life! It obviously didn't all fall on that idiotic gramophone that used to stand here. That dopey thing came to life and caused us no end of annoyance.

"You see? The floor itself is now alive! Nailed down as it is, it can't move any more than this, and with nothing to serve as a mouth it can only squeak. Funny that old Pipt never noticed it. Typical man; he's never done any housecleaning in the week since the accident."

She paused and Eureka could see her pink brains whirling round and round. The glass cat was clearly doing some heavy thinking. Apparently the brains were good for more than just looking attractive. "I don't think," she said presently, "we ought to just leave the powder there—"

"Tell Dr. Pipt?" suggested the kitten.

"No!" vetoed the older cat. "What good would that do *us*?"

"Use it to bring those two people back to life?"

"Are you crazy? What use would two live one-ton statues be to anybody?" (Bungle was exaggerating. The statue of Uncle Nunkie weighed only about four hundred pounds, that of the buxom housewife perhaps a hundred more.) "Besides, they're scheduled for coming back to *real* life with the demagicifier as soon as we can get Rod to work on it. Here, see if you can find that gold salt-shaker! It should still be lying about on the floor somewhere, if I know Pipt's housekeeping. Of course the bottle's alive too by now but I don't think it could have rolled very far with no feet or hands."

Eureka espied the little gold flask in no time and batted it into a conveniently obscure corner under a hanging drape. "We'll get Rod to scrape up the powder," whispered Bungle, "when the magician isn't looking."

But now Litenin came from the bathroom wrapped in an old zodiac robe of the doctor's — and smelling like fresh-burnt rubber. The sauerkraut scent was almost eliminated, overlaid by some attar of roses the man had found in the medicine cabinet. They

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had a right jolly lunch, all sitting up to the table except the awkward Woozy, who had a dish of honeycomb on the floor. Dr. Pipt spread some mouse-paste on Eureka's portion of the rice-vegetable ragout; that made it more palatable for the flesh-eating kitten.

When the table was cleared came the big moment. Litenin drew from his coat pockets the parcels from the AntMagCoop and spread them out for the sorcerer's inspection. "Ah, yes," said the adept, rubbing his hands and recognizing everything. "Just think, this stuff is being mass-produced now! But they've always been farther along technologically down there in the south. And of course it's always much easier to dispel magic than to create it. Sometimes just with a word..."

In the nature of things the demagicifying tablets would not do for the treatment the friends planned, nor with the best will in the world could the statues, though the mouths of both were slightly ajar, be brought to swallow a draught. As for the varnish for spreading over a surface to be rendered magicless: "Too little of it," declared the magician, holding the bottle up to the light. The clear red fluid sparkled magically, even though its effect might be the opposite. "This would cover only about half of Margolotte, to say nothing of Nunk.

"It will have to be the spray," he constated, showing round the atomizer can, which was the largest of the containers the travelers had brought. "It will cover a wider area, although it does have the drawback of being less precise. That simply means," Pipt went on, "that we can't do the demagicifying here, inside the room. A whiff of it might get on you." All the animals shuddered. "Or some of this crowd of kickshaws might go back to their original condition—and my wife is so fond of them as they are. Not to mention all the rest of the products of my years of magic-working. No, I'm afraid the only thing is to get the statuary out of doors."

Everybody looked solemn. The statues in massive marble didn't look as if they would be easy to transport anywhere.

“Never mind,” cried Dr. Pipt, taking fresh courage. “Mr. Litenin! if you’ll lend a hand...”

Rod left the table as the crooked little man darted into a bedroom, opened wall cupboards, and hauled forth quilts and blankets. “We’ll wrap the statuary in these and roll them outside. We two between us ought to be able to manage that, and without breaking any hearts—or fingertips.”

The animals watched with more than common concern as the operation was carried out. “Further away from the house!” warned the magician. “No good getting live garden gnomes under foot from out of the herbaceous borders. There! right in the middle of that shrubbery, I think. Good job it’s virtually wind-still. We can aim the spray-jet more exactly.”

So they dragged and shoved the two heavy statues under some box bushes and drew aside the blanket wrappings. “Whoops,” said Dr. Pipt. “Better pull the coverings away completely. We know what happened the last time we brought a quilt to life.” The sorcerer, in the excitement, must have been confused, for unless those blankets were magically affected already, nothing was going to happen to *them*. Still, it was a funny situation: marble statues were expected to come to life by a process of *removing* magic from them!

Now it would seem that all was ready. The magician unsealed the spray can. He aimed it at his wife’s marble head and pressed. Okay! The strong features relaxed and the eyes opened. Quickly the adept sprayed down the length of the statue’s form, then switched to the feet of the enstatued Nunkie and began to demagicify there.

But alas! Rod Litenin was present and, as Bungle had pointed out, it must have been time for a little unprogrammed weather such as he so frequently occasioned. Out of a clear sky a tiny whirlwind swept into the shrubbery and blew the squirting demagicifier spray right through the box hedge which, being a fully natural thing, suffered no change—and onto the two stone kalidahs which guarded the path on the other side of the bushes.

With frightful roars the two beasts resumed vivid voracious

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life. Our friends had cause to be grateful for that roaring because it instantly alerted Dr. Pipt to the realities of the new situation. "Good Goorikop!" he swore. "The Kalidahs!!" But even these exclamations the clever doctor had presence of mind to make sotto voce. "Quick!" he hissed to his assistant, "into the house!"

The return to life of Unc Nunkie and Mrs. Pipt was startling for the two, to say the least. They hadn't an instant to think what had happened before their hands were seized, they were dragged to their feet, and set stumbling and scrambling along the path and in through the kitchen door, which the magician slammed behind them.

Swen Swan, with his tiny passenger, flew fast and far. Whenever they'd sight a swarm of insects (mosquitoes were the most common) the swan would settle somewhere unobtrusively and Lurabelle Ladybeetle would crawl out of the swansdown and wing off to pass the warning word to the smaller fliers. Actually Lurabelle was in a fair way to establishing an insect messenger service to rival the Bird Messenger Service of Oz, already some years in operation. In the present case, Lurabelle didn't think the birds, notorious devourers of insects, would be quite the agents to whom to leave the main spreading of the alarm.

"Listen, friends!" she'd cry in her tiny voice. "There's a terror abroad in the land! It doesn't threaten yourselves" (unless she was talking to butterflies) "but I feel sure you'll want to help." Then she'd briefly outline the situation. "Would you scatter and warn every butterfly you meet to take cover? while passing the word to any of *their* fellows they meet. They should beware especially of human boys, those noted predators."

Her proclamation was greeted by every reaction from indifference (by the wood-lice) to rousing enthusiasm. The locusts were the most excited. "Oh, shocking!" their ring-leader hissed. "We've got to do something about that! It's just about time for us to swarm again. We'll make that the theme of this year's drive: 'Bomb a Human!' That'll make 'em sit up and take notice—and realize insects are not to be trifled with!"

"Oh, please," pleaded the ladybug. "Don't, I beg of you, do anything drastic! *Just* warn any butterflies, especially yellow ones, that you run into, to keep out of the way of humans for the time being. That's *all* that's wanted... And thanks ever so!"

On they flew, gentleman bird and ladybird. By the evening of the second day they had reached the far northwestern corner of Oz, warning all minifliers in their path. There was little they could do at night. Many species of insects were of course abroad then in force but, save for the lightning-bugs, it was so hard to see them at any distance.

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Swen Swan settled down on a small swamp by late light and Lurabelle, who was getting hungry, flew off on a short hop to try to find some of the plants that harbored her favorite form of nourishment.

Like most insects she was attracted by night lights. That's how it happened that she blundered into an open doorway of a human dwelling. Humans were the very enemy she was warning her co-arthropods about, but the light humans generated about them at night was so attractive that the poor little ladybeetle grew dizzy and fell for its charm.

Luckily, it was a little girl, not a boy, who stood in the open doorway, talking to a giraffe.

"Oh, Gerry!" she said, "say it again!"

"Why, what was that, my dear?" said the giraffe, inclining his long neck as low as he could, which wasn't really very low.

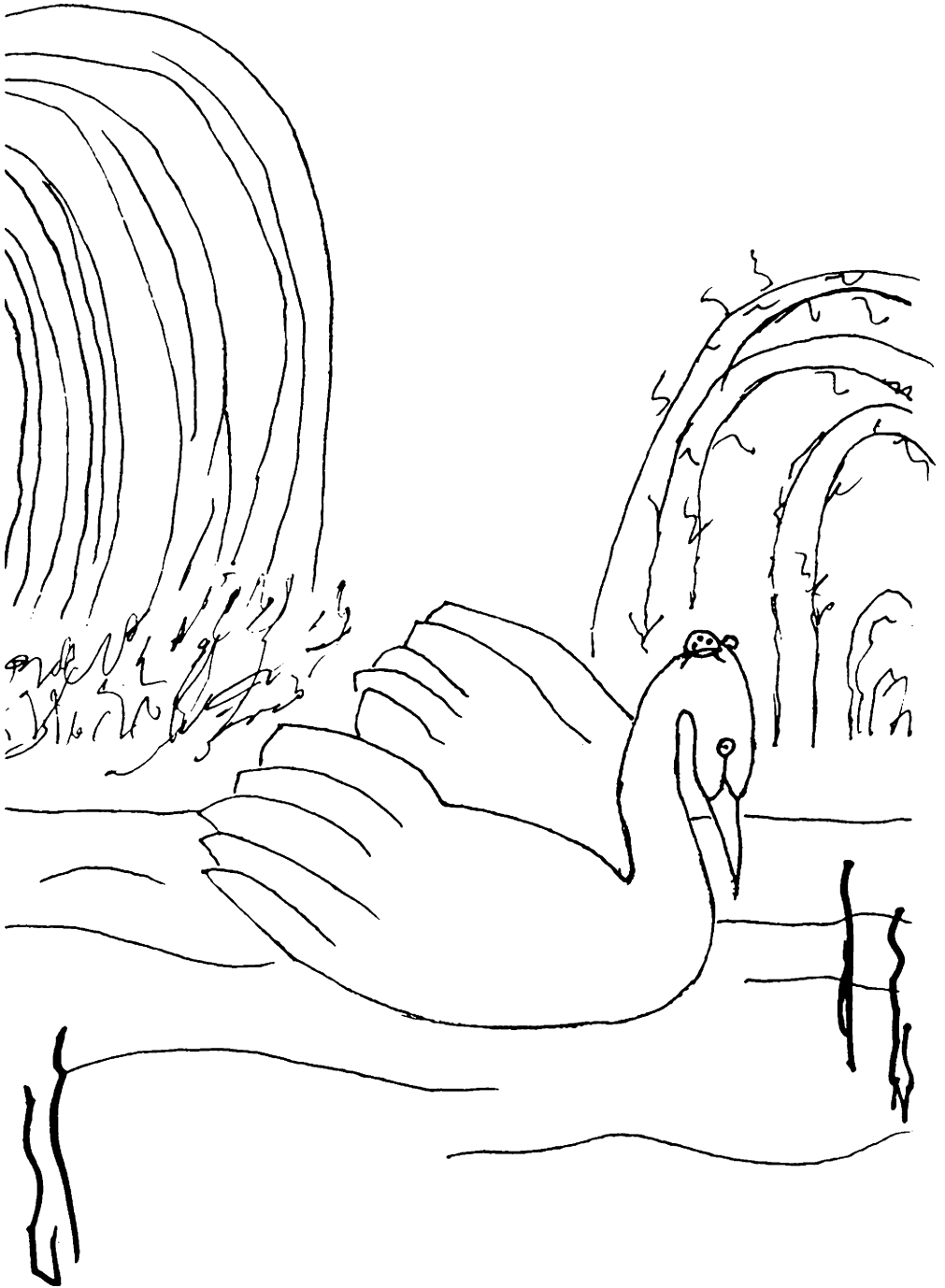
"You know; a little while ago, when we were talking about my writing—my stories."

"Why, I just expressed my admiration for your industry in doing something creative in your spare time, instead of just running around playing like most little girls, I believe, do. It's—well, adorable."

"Well, thank you. But it was more specific than that, what you said. It was over so soon, you know. It takes hours—days, sometimes—to write a story, but any praise one gets for it is over in seconds. I wish that part could last longer somehow."

"I said," said Gerry, speaking *very* slowly, to make it last longer (undeniably the result was a bit stagey), "I can't tell you how much I enjoy reading your works! Your puns, lists of details, and wordplay thrill me as much as your intriguing plots, original ideas, and character exploration. *Please* never cease writing!"

"How lovely," said the little girl, basking. "It's *so* nice of you to feel that way, Gerry. It's for you I write, of course, and for the very few other fans I've got. Sometimes I think our remote little corner of the world is a little *too* remote: nobody can hear about my stories. Of course Princess Ozma—"



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At this word the little ladybeetle gave a start and whirred confusedly across the light. Her motion in turn made the little girl break off and she exclaimed, "Oh, there's a ladybird!"

"Now we're three," commented the giraffe cozily.

"No, we're not. Help!" returned the girl. "We're four! There's Billina. Oh, little ladybird!" she cried, "Have a care! Don't go near the fire."

This warning was well given, for on a basket before the glowing hearth drowsed a yellow hen who would just as soon swallow you as look at you, if you were a ladybeetle.

Lurabelle L. based and came to her senses and quit flying brainlessly toward light sources. "Oh, thank you, miss," she exclaimed and settled on Lana Peethisaw's shoulder. "I mustn't give way to impulses, I know. I'm on an important mission."

"How exciting!" said the girl, whose sharp hearing could just make out the words of the insect near her ear. "Do tell... We perish for a little news of the great world here," she continued in an aside.

So Lurabelle Ladybeetle recounted her adventures, and Lana relayed the tale to Gerry Giraffe, who'd got settled, hunkered down in the doorway, to hear this bed-time story. It made a nice change for them.

Concluding, the ladybug said, "Say, you wouldn't happen to have some aphids about, would you? I actually came here on a foraging expedition; haven't had a thing since morning."

"Gosh, aphids," said Lana. "Honestly, I don't think I do. But I'd love to serve you something. What about a drop of milk? or a dab of honey? They be any good?"

Lurabelle wasn't sure but was by no means averse to trying them. In the end she did make a meal of sorts. Then she turned to go.

Lana was disappointed. "Won't you stay the night?" she invited. "You'd be quite safe here on the mantelpiece!"

But no, the ladybird thought her traveling companion might grow anxious. "I'd better return au côté de chez Swan," she said, breaking for some reason into French.

“What did you call us?” snarled the ravening tiger-headed monsters.

“COLLeeDOZZ’...?” said the life-sized pug from his secure location on the eaves.

“Where did you get that weird pronunciation from?” sneered the two. “Sounds like ‘collie dogs,’ about the tamest, least threatening breed known.”

“Er—well, from reading,” apologized the pug. “I read about you fierce creatures with bear bodies and tiger heads in a book of Oz history. There was no glossary with the book, and the spelling: ‘K-A-L-I-D-A-H-S’, with that odd ‘H’ in there, made me think that’s where the stress was: ‘DOZZ’.”

Surprisingly the two beats burst into a loud guffaw, which they quite seemed to enjoy. Then—“We’re COLLIDERS!” they roared. “That’s the main thing about us: we’re tigers—literally—at colliding with things, usually with other animals, which we proceed to devour. And when there’s nobody else around we collide with each other—just for fun.”

“Well, then; goodness you do,” put in the pink kitten at Toby’s side. “I guess you were making up for lost time when you ran into each other just now. I bet your heads are sore. Anyway it gave our friends time to get inside. Much better, really. Now we can talk sensibly.” She looked along the roof gutter where her dog and cat friends perched beside her. The heads of the humans plus the square forepaws of a Woozy were just visible from that vantage point, at a couple of windows below. The predators paced on the garden path.

“Funny,” the china dog went on musing. “I wonder why you’re spelled with a ‘K’ in the book.”

“‘K’, schnay!” derided the kalidahs. “We’re no scholars and we don’t know what it says about us in any book. But we’re wasting time. Come down, you flesh ones, and let us devour you. We haven’t eaten in a long time.”

“I’d soft-pedal that yen, if I were you,” purred the pink kitten

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smugly. "Being away, as it were, so long, maybe you don't know what's happened."

That brought the ursofelines up with something of a start. "'Happened'? What's happened? It looks pretty much the same around here as when we arrived to eat the householders."

"Good heavens, animals!" cried out Dr. Pipt from the window beneath. "That was thirty years ago. A lot could happen—and did—in that time."

Eureka, as an inmate of Queen Ozma's palace, knew most about it and she told the tale. "The Queen, who is as just as she is powerful—and that's going some—put out a decree ordering 'the destruction of all Kalidahs in Oz for the general good of the inhabitants of her realm' was the way it was worded, I think."

"But that's awful," bemoaned the two beasts. "You mean all the rest of our kind are gone? Putting to death an entire species! And what for? Consuming other creatures? That's our nature! What's just about punishing us for that?"

"Oh, Ozma's ideas of justice," explained the kitten, "go beyond merely strictly enforcing all the existing laws. She issues edicts just on general principles—and getting rid of you lot was one such move. Anyway, yes: your kind were destroyed, root and branch, so you two are the only ones left. I'd tread a bit cautiously if I were you, if you don't want to become totally extinct. Especially, don't eat any people!"

"But they're so delicious," wailed the kalidahs. "They're our favorite dish. And we have to eat *something*."

"How about fish?" suggested Eureka. "As part feline, like me, you must like fish. Try to find some piranhas and eat those. I don't think Ozma would object to that at all. Or snakes—"

"Ugh! I hate snakes," complained a kalidah, the female one. "They're so slithery."

"Well, rats!" said the kitten, visited by an inspiration. "They're a bit small so you'd have to catch a lot of them. But that's all to the good."

"We-I-I." The ravenants weren't sure. But you could see they were rattled by the bad news. They seemed to be going to slink away.

"If you'll be nice now," Eureka called after them, "we'll put in a good word for you at court. After all, you're an endangered species now."

The Kalidahs cast a surly growl over their shoulders. Ha, ha, very funny. Then the nearest fringe of a thicket, leading to the Blue Forest, swallowed them up.

As the crowd regathered in the kitchen the others praised the kitten for her valuable contribution. Meanwhile Mrs. Pipt and the old gentleman, like the Kalidahs, were hungry after a protracted period of emmarblement and they were glad to see the conjurer blow up the cook-fire. The housewife slung on her apron. The first fine brief rapture of reunion had already taken place right in the middle of the encounter with the tiger-bears, but there still was much to be explained and exclaimed over. The first shock came when the crooked magician turned to old Nunk and spoke his name.

"Nunk' nothing!" exclaimed the oldster, and everybody fainted. Two whole words at once! It was feared that Ojo's uncle was suffering from oral diarrhea.

More was to come. "The name's Nunculas P. Gennet. I hope you'll take note. I want to thank you, sir," he addressed Dr. Pipt, "for breaking the spells I—that is, we—" Here a graceful gesture in the direction of Mrs. Margolotte at the stove, "—were under."

"Spells' did you say?" spoke Pipt, who was not hard of hearing. "I was only aware of a single enchantment, that of emmarblization."

"Oh, no," said Gennet. "I've been under an earlier spell as well, going back into well-nigh ancient times. You must all have noticed? This taciturnity—everyone must have known that was abnormal. That would cause a healthy, non-psychotic young man to limit his speech to one word at a time? Yes, it was a spell—put upon me by a fell witch at the time we were driven into exile. The witches weren't sufficiently cruel to 'Kill off' the royal infant, Lord Ojo, and someone had to care for him while he grew up. They threw the curse of taciturnity over me. The idea was that I shouldn't be able to give Ojo grandiose notions by

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recounting at length our noble past. But that's over now. Eventually we must do something about reclaiming our royal heritage. But where is the boy? I long with all my heart to see the Prince."

Everybody kept fainting and refainting at the incredibility of this speech but enough were conscious at the end of it so as to be able to relate in a few well chosen words that Ojo had loyally gone off to find the ingredients for a potion to undo his uncle's transformation.

"Splendid boy," said the uncle. "I'd have expected no less. I in turn must be off to find him now. Which way did he go?"

They told him, adding that the youth was now known to be wandering somewhere in the yellow Winkie country on the other side of Oz, past the Emerald City. "I shall make ready," pursued Nunculas. "Dame Margolotte, may I borrow a pair of scissors, and of you, sir" — turning back to Dr. Pipt— "a razor? I must get rid of this nasty old beard: another concomitant of the enfeebling spell put upon me. Nor was I allowed the right of every Ozite: to prevent my own aging. I've grown old and grey — while my elder brother, Ojo's father, was a young lusty man to look at when I last saw him. I wonder how it will have gone with him — and where he is ..."§

But none of those present was able to tell him.

The preparations for lunch, part II, were just at an inviting stage when N.P. Gennet came from the bathroom. The dreary old breast-length beard was trimmed to a smart Van Dyke. This seemed to have taken years off his age and he now appeared a spry sixty-year-old. Gennet scarcely seemed able to finish his well deserved meal in his eagerness to be off on his quest.

The old man was most interested to learn that he could expect company on his journey. The mixed bag of animals plus the tall gaunt wanderer Rod Litenin would now also be going to the Emerald City to let Princess Ozma know of the happy outcome of affairs.

But wouldn't they at least spend the night and rest up after

§ See *Ojo in Oz*. Editor's note.

all they had been through? the Pipts, in dismay, wanted to know.

Oh, no—Rod and his friends agreed—they ought to bring the good news to the capital as soon as might be. They could be well on down the road by nightfall.

And so it fell out. The happily reunited couple, Margolotte and her Doctor, stood arm in arm at the Dutch door and watched their brief but so beneficial visitors go down the garden path.

c h a p t e r s e v e n t e e n

N.P. Gennet was trailing ten yards behind Rod and the animals. The smell had finally got to him. And yet he couldn't deny that the stalwart Litenin was an attractive personality, despite the odor and even if the road did tremble under him in small landslides from time to time. Legerdemain Lane was splitting down the middle at this very moment but happily the earth tremor took a breather before they reached the house at the end of the road.

Mrs. Lucinda came to the door of the blue-purple cottage and welcomed the arrivals kindly. She shook hands with Rod Litenin, gagged as the breeze was in the south, but recovered quickly, invited the company inside, and went to let her husband know.

Nunculas Gennet was charmed by the silver-suited youth Zippiochoggolak who now made an appearance, attracted by the commotion at the front door. "So like my own boy," said the old man, "though he's a few years younger than you—to look at."

"Yes, I guess I aged a lot the time I was asleep in the poppy field[§]," admitted the young man with the stand-up hair.

But the reminiscence was broken off as the boy's mother returned with finger on lips and said, "Come along if you will. My husband's attending at the bedside of a visitor. He's dying, I'm afraid."

"'Dying'!!!" cried everybody, thunderstruck. "But nobody dies in Oz. It's simply not done."

"I know," said Madam Lucinda. "One *need* not die in our country. But that's not so say one *cannot* die. And old Mr. Breign chooses to die. So he says anyway. He came here to do it. He says he wanted to be among friendly faces at the last: people who would truly understand. Of course we're flattered..." but her voice trailed off as the crowd of tiptoeing arrivals entered the sick-room.

§ See *Uncle Henry and Aunt Em in Oz*. Editor's rote.

On a bed arranged under windows that let in purple-blue daylight half-sat, half-lay the oldest man that they had ever seen. Nunculas Gennet felt a mere youngster in comparison. The figure was appallingly shrunk, as if both flesh *and* bones had wasted away, but the head in contrast seemed enormous. It was propped up on small crutches that rested on the man's shoulders. At his side a homely but amiable-appearing fellow was reading the newspaper through the invalid's transparent flesh.

Both turned as the newcomers stopped and stared. "Huh, huh, huk," grunted the ancient man. "You're admiring my brain crutches, I see. The thing's lame but it doesn't seem to want to quit functioning. My memory, for instance: it's as brilliant as ever. I've got so much to remember—and I still do—all of it!"

The new arrivals drew near and gazed in fascination. The ancient man's features were so wasted you couldn't tell what he looked like, but the famous lame brain amazed with its clarity. "Gosh," muttered the Glass Cat. "I thought *I* was the only one whose brains you could see working."

Host Wammuppirovocuck meanwhile had observed the duties appertaining to his position and quietly shaken hands or paws with the visitors and brought chairs. He spoke low but only not to startle the patient, who was not in pain but simply very feeble and fading by the moment.

"Who is it?" whispered Rod Litenin.

"Didn't my wife explain? ! That's Laym F. Breign, one of the co-founders of Oz. He's thousands of years old, much older than, for example, even Sorceress Glinda. He was one of the great Goorikop's associates right at the very creation of Oz. But let the old gentleman tell you about it himself. He's still well up to that."

Wam leaned toward the bedside and expressed the general wish.

"Why, sure," cackled the oldster. "What do they want to know?"

Litenin spoke for all. "It seems impossible," he stammered. "It's astonishing—and extraordinary and quite incredible—"

"What is, my son?"

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"That you are still alive, father Lame-brain!"

"Oh, that's nothing," poohpoohed the old fellow. "The powerful Goorikop was well able to grant immortality to anybody he wanted to. He even built it into the structure of Oz in such a way that any latter-day resident who was clever enough could release the gift of eternal life for the benefit of all creatures living here. I see that's now been done.[§] And of ccourse he didn't want his co-workers at the inception of Oz dropping off before he did himself, so he made us all immortal—with conditions."

"'Conditions', sir?" said Rod.

"Yes. For instance, if we ever *wanted* to die we could. But it wouldn't be easy! It's not. I can't seem to really put my mind to this dying business."

"Well, *don't*, sir! —if I may counsel you," urged Rod. "There's so much we'd like to hear."

"Ask away then," chortled the old gent.

"What was it like in those days—when you founded Oz? What did you have to do?"

"I don't know what Goorikop's method was. I just know he was transcendently powerful—like a god. Let's face it: he *was* a god. Anyway he was able to commandeer one of the earth's tectonic plates all for himself and he shoved it around fast, bumping into other plates and scraping bits off of them, until he'd raised himself a nice little continent. That plate remains today the fastest-roving of all such on Earth."

"That was *Sempernumquam*?" supposed Litenin, and Nunculas Gennet nodded agreeingly. "—with Oz in the middle."

"It wasn't there, in the middle, in those days. The continent's center at that time was all desert, like Australia. It was Goorikop's brilliant idea much later to turn it into a wonderland. That's when he enlisted us scientific/artistic types to help him."

"What were you supposed to do?"

"What, my own job? That was to dream up all the crazy countries the old man wanted to populate the new land with. I don't know why he thought I'd be especially good at that. I've

[§] See *Aunt Em and Uncle Henry in Oz*. Editor's note.

never felt all that contemptuous of human beings.”

His listeners looked puzzled. Breign found himself more or less holding a lecture. “Yes. You’ve noticed how all the little odd kingdoms in Oz are populated by travesties of humans. Not animals. Those wander freely all over the country. They’re not penned up in communities like the people. Animals all have their own dignity and naturalness, unlike men, and there’s very little about them that is easy to send up. The only funny business Goorikop did with animals was to mix up parts of different species—like limoneags and kalidahs.

“But the people. ‘Do whatever you can to make humans look ridiculous,’ he said to me. So I had to invent people with wheels for hands and feet, or people who only cared about the appearance of, respectively, the inside or the outside of their houses, or people with just an empty space where their brains ought t to be. It was depressing. But how Goorikop enjoyed it! He’d go around and visit these communities and laugh at the inhabitants for behaving in the ways we’d programmed them to behave.

“Of course he was being just like other gods in that: inventing creatures with particular character traits and then just sitting by and watching them stew in their own juice, enjoying seeing the messes they got themselves into as a result of those characteristics he’d given them, but never lifting a finger to help.

“I will say this for Goorikop though—he had just as much contempt for gods as he had for men. By now I have to admit he was right, since I’ve spent the last few hundred years living among them. Gods—and goddesses—are something else! But at the time I didn’t know that. I thought it was odd of the god to give me a blanket directive: ‘No churches in Oz!’ but I did what I was told. No churches nor anything related to religion: no priests, no occult rituals, no monasteries or nunneries and ergo, no satire on religion, which would obviously be a natural for one or more of the kookie countries: a land of religious fanatics or of hypocrites, for example. He could have had great sport with such—but he didn’t. Maybe, in a backhand sort of way, it

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showed a certain respect for religion: not wanting to send it up as he did everything else."

"Pardon me," said the pink kitten. A cat may look at a king and I guess Eureka thought a kitten could converse with a god's assistant. "Somebody did put a church in Oz. I don't know if it was you. My friend Dorothy Gale, a human, told me about it."

"A church? Are you kidding? Name one!" cried the old fellow excitedly.

"It was in a place called 'the Dainty China Country'—" began the kitten but old Mr. Breign broke in.

"I remember! Say no more! Oh, that dainty china country! That was almost my biggest flop. Originally it was meant to be part of a contrasting pair, like the lands of the Hoppers and the Horners, along with a 'rough crude clumsy china country' but that last really was my biggest flop and I erased it—"

"So *you* made the china church?"

"Yes—in an off moment. But I was working under pressure. I had *two weeks* in which to populate all of Oz with crazy colonies of people before old Goorikop came around with his magic staff and brought them all to life with one sweeping gesture. As I say, the China Country was one of my lesser triumphs. The main bad thing was that I made the *whole thing* out of china, the ground and all. Instantly when the chinas came to life they started falling down and breaking themselves. But alas, it was too late. I couldn't go back and change things. Luckily, I had remembered there must be *occasional* breakage, so I supplied a mender among the colony's people, with a never-ending supply of iron glue."

The old man paused. Toby the life-sized pug had by now insinuated himself into the front rank of the audience and hung on every word. "Oh, go on, Mr. Breign! please. Tell us more about the china country."

"Goodness me," said the ancient one, screwing up what remained to him of eyes. "Is that a china dog? But what a size! I never made any but miniatures, and I made all the china creatures there are in Oz."

"I wonder if you may be mistaken, Mr. Breign," put in Rod

Litenin. He drew from one of his big pockets the small, the purple, the big-headed china dog. The invalid peered blindly.

"This one's a miniature," Rod continued, "but it isn't alive, so it wouldn't be, any more than Toby, one of yours either. Where do you suppose it came from?"

"Good Goorikop!" shrieked the old gentleman. "That's Purp! How in all the wonders did he get in your pocket?!"

"Purp'," said everybody and looked blank.

"Yes, yes, a silly nickname I myself gave the animal—and told him so when he was brought to life. It abbreviates 'purple' and has echoes of 'pup'. His full name is 'Purpupplio'.

"You're quite sure, Father Breign?" asked Wam, as puzzled as anyone.

"Of course I'm sure. See his big head. It's modeled on my own; out of proportion in relation to the body. But the last time I saw him he was alive and well and living in the Dainty China Country... I don't understand a thing."

All Rod could do was explain that the toy dog had been given him as a prize at an anti-magic emporium down in the Quadling country. He had no idea of its provenance.

"It came from the China Country," declared the ancient man. "I'll tell you that right now. 'Antimagic', you say. Wam here's been telling me about this idiotic crusade to get rid of magic in the fairyland. That's even lame-brainer than anything I ever thought up. You mean there are even stores now distributing anti-magic wholesale? Wonders will cease!"

"Yes, I guess they will," agreed Rod. "I think I see now why the shop woman gave it to me—a sample of what you could do with a well-placed demagicifying pill or spray."

"Shocking," mumbled the old invalid. "Shocking. So much for all my work, and Goorikop's. Does this mean the whole dainty china country has been killed off?"

Here Eureka the kitten could supply information. "No," she said. "I hear all the news at court and so far there's been no word that Queen Ozma is going around putting the quietus on all the little magic countries."

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“Then somebody must have silenced the little dog individually. It was an ‘anti-magic’ shop, you say. Pretty obviously the staff there did it. But how did the dog get there in the first place, out of its home country? “

Nobody could guess—but they could all wish. They all wished the china dog could speak.

“Nothing easier,” said Rod Litenin matter-of-factly and took from another pocket the gold salt shaker with the powder of life. It jumped about lively in his hand.

“What’s that?” said L.F. Breign and the wizard Wam together, and Rod told them of the salvaging of the vital substance off the floor of the kitchen of Dr. Pipt. “Shall we use it?” he asked diffidently. “After all, there’s an embargo on the use of magic now.”

“Oh, to heck with that nonsense,” dismissed Breign. “Anyway, the dog belongs alive, so to express it. Go ahead.”

So Rod Litenin did as he was authorized. Carefully he unscrewed the perforated gold cap and took out the little round of (live) cardboard he had put in during a quiet moment earlier in the day. He hadn’t wanted any of the powder to dribble out and bring his pocket to life.

With great pains he sprinkled just seven grains of the powder on the back of the tiny purple dog where it stood on old Mr. Breign’s counterpane.

Then, “Help! help and rescue!” Purple cried. “Rescue, fair lords, or else the day is lost!”

Swan and beetle swept down the dry westernmost marches of Winkieland. It was mostly desert insects who could be passed the word here but the pair did come across patches of Saffron Patches or colonies of Canary Fritillaries, who were warned to watch out for their wings. These turned up at long intervals, however, and otherwise it was dry work. They hadn't seen a pond or a puddle since leaving the little (and rather shallow) marsh near Lana Peethisaw's back door.

Mr. Swan made one of his rare comments. "Got to have a drink—and a rest—soon, Lurabelle. A swan's no good without water."

"Oh, I know, I know," yelled (so as to be heard against the wind of their passage) the beetle. "I'm feeling rather parched myself."

But it was another half hour, marked only by a short croaked alert called out to a tribe of sandfleas, before the flying couple spotted a sluggish-trickling stream of yellow fluid.

I don't say "water" because it was the immediate discovery of the thirsty pair that such it was not. "Awrrrk!" squawked the swan and took to his wings again hastily. "What a terrible taste! What is that stuff?!"

Lurabelle Ladybug hadn't even had a chance to sample the liquid yet but when Swen flopped down again a few yards off on dry alkali to preen and rid himself of the viscous substance the ladybeetle crept out and flew to his bill. She took a gingerly sip.

"I don't know," she said. But, on balance, "It *is* queer—but I think I might acquire a liking for it." But one who eats aphids may perhaps be thought to have a perverted taste. "I shouldn't be surprised but what it's nourishing."

But Swen Swan was gagging, and hating every moment of the experience. "It's sticky!" he protested, and of course when something horrid is sticky as well it becomes doubly dreadful.

"Well, naturally!" whistled a third small voice near them.

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Bird and ladybird peered but could distinguish no informant. "What else would you expect of mucilage? That's Mucilage Creek," went on the speaker.

Lurabelle flew to the ground following the direction of the voice and there, nearly invisible against the grey-white alkali, made out some queer creatures like walking grains of salt. "Was it you who spoke?"

"Sure. I couldn't help but hear what your big friend was honking... I'm Gus Gumbug," said the tiny insect and stuck out a foot. It was, however, too small for even the ladybeetle to get a proper hold of.

Anyway "Charmed, I'm sure," she said. "I'm glad you spoke up. We were wondering where in the world we were—"

"Why, this is the District of Cohesion!" exclaimed the gumbug. "I thought everybody knew that. Like I said: that's Mucilage Creek. It flows across the Paste Waste down to the Glue Lagoon, which is part of Lake Epoxy."

"Oh, gosh," said the beetle, dismayed. "No help there. You see, we're perishing for a bit of water."

"Water"? What's that?"

"Dear me." The ladybird had to think. Explaining the obvious is not so simple. "Why, it's that liquid that falls from the sky," she said, inspired; "—now and then." It was clear to her it didn't often fall in this desiccated region.

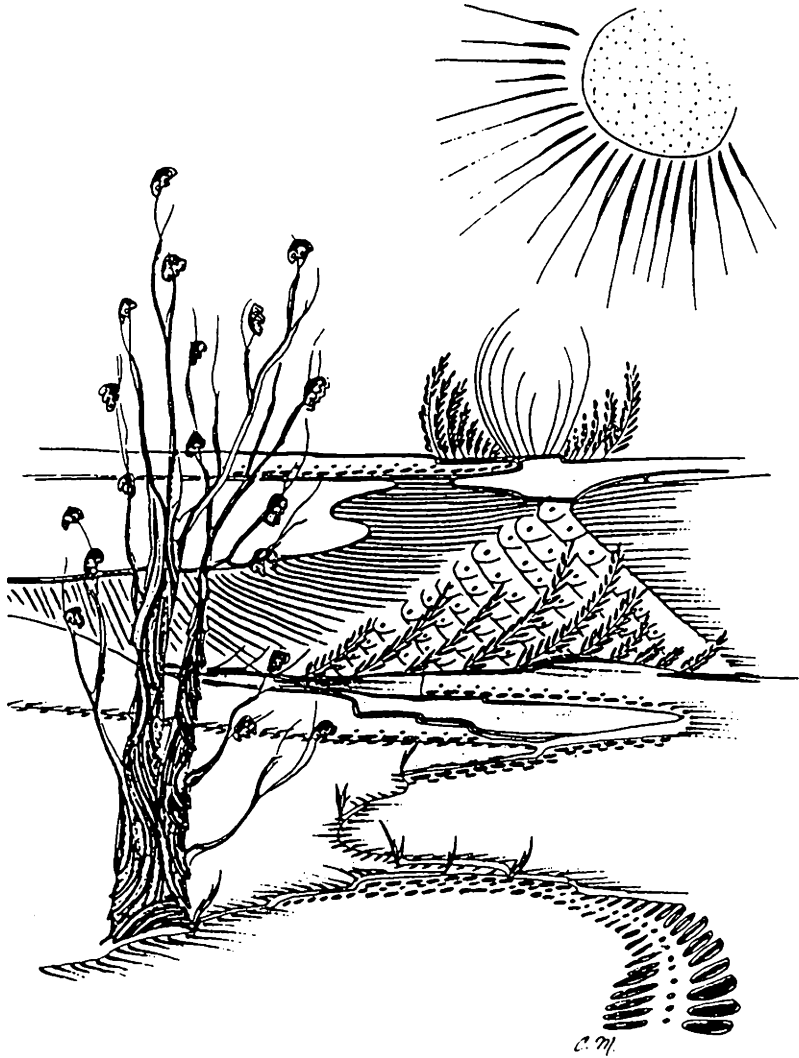
"Nothing falls from the sky here but cement dust—off the Desert there to the west, you know," informed the native. "Sometimes a few grains of putty, but that's only only once in a glue moon. Otherwise nothing."

Lurabelle coughed with the dryness of it all. "I guess we'd better not linger," she said. "But thank you, Mr. er, Gumbug—"

"That's right. Like 'humbug', only different. You've heard of humbugs?"

Who had not in the land of the Wizard of Oz?

"We're not like that," declared Gus. "Humbugs don't hum or only very occasionally. We're the real thing. Just let us get at something and we'll gum up the works permanently. This whole



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Waste is nothing but the impacted bodies o' billions of deceased gumbugs: all sticking together to the end, you see."

"'Deceased'?" wondered Lurabelle. "But what do you do in this wave of deathlessness that's swept over Oz in the last dozen years?"

"Yes, that's a problem," confessed the gumbug. "Actually we're getting rather desperate. None of us can perform our natural function of adhering until we're properly dead, and now that consummation is denied us. We're teeming—" Yes, now that she was down at ground level the ladybird could see that the entire surface, as far as the eye *could* see, of what they had thought was alkali flats was faintly seething with the restless fidgeting of myriads of apparent mineral grains. "—and we don't know where to turn," finished the bug.

"Have you thought of migrating?" asked the beetle.

"Where to?" asked the puzzled gumbug. "'Who'd want a tribe of creatures that as soon as they touch liquid solidify into an unbreakable whole with whatever they're next to?"

"Hm," said Lurabelle, "that *is* a rather special condition. But I'll keep it in mind as I carry on with our present mission... Thanks for telling me. I guess it's a good thing my friend and I didn't find any water here! By now we'd be moving our feet very glue-like—"

"'Glue-like'? You'd be bonded fast for evermore," assured Gus Gumbug without the slightest accent of doubt.

The whole story came out. Poor Purpupplio. He couldn't know at the start that his impassioned plea for rescue came thirteen years too late.

Better late than never though. The pitifulness of his appeal turned all hearts to thoughts of assistance. The china pug led the contingent that was all for dropping everything and heading south again to see if they might, even at that late date, trace the whereabouts of the china princess, the china clown, the china churchwarden and chaplain and chieftain and chandler, charwoman, chambermaid, and child. Purp could vouch for their having lost life at the same moment as himself. The fumes of the flit-gun in the hands of the china boy had been very pervasive.

It was of course all news to him that the curious old shop where he and his kind had met their fate was no more. What would have happened to his china companions in all the years between? Was, in fact, the magical China Country itself free from assault in the reign of terror that now held all magic-Oz in its grip? They must be off and see.

Only Uncle Nunculas held back. His prime motive was naturally to follow in the wake of his nephew, which in the first instance was along the road to the Emerald City: west, not south. The glass cat tried to argue him out of it. "Ojo won't be at the E.C. anyway. He still has to find the water from the dark well and the drop of oil from a live man's body and the wing of a butterfly. He'll be days if not weeks in locating all those." But the old man was firm and declared he would push on alone if the others were to veer south on their errand of mercy.

"But not before tomorrow?" insisted Dame Lucinda. "You must have supper with us and spend the night. We've lots of room."

In any event it was important by now to get Rod out of the sick-room where the smell of burnt rubber had gradually got so strong that it was making the invalid pluck at the coverlet. Rod was conscious of the offense and went gladly. This change was

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for the better on several scores.

In the first place, the vast annex to which the visitors were shown had a haunting fragrance of its own: the subtle scent of deadly sleep poppies. "Oh, that's right!" recalled the Wizard Wam. "We must air the place out, Lucinda. Otherwise our guests may have trouble waking up in the morning. Put they'll certainly sleep well tonight!"

Furthermore, the great building joined on to the side of the wizardly residence was constructed entirely of reinforced rubber, so an additional rubber scent there (even though burnt) was quite in order. And finally, the great size of the dormitory, once it was well aired out, meant that no odor at all within it would become truly oppressive just in a few hours. The travelers dumped their belongings in the big hall, had a wash, and joined the family for dinner.

"I see you have one tenant already, Mr. Wam," said N.P. Gennet, tucking in his napkin.

"Oh, yes, that's the Pince of Wates," agreed the genial host; and the story made entertaining table talk over the purple-cabbage dumplings and grape pie. "He's been sleeping there a couple of years."[§]

"Uninterruptedly?" asked Gennet, who observed that the tall sleeper had not risen and joined the others at the refreshment board.

"Yes. Happily so," confirmed Wam. "He's on a reducing course. Originally he filled the whole building."

"Good heavens," said the others, for they had seen how the annex covered an area equivalent to a very large tennis course or small football field.

Wammuppirovocuck told the tale. "He's the heir to an island kingdom down off the coast of Sempernumquam. The people there have, I suspect, a certain amount of rubber in their makeup. In any case their integument appears capable of stretching indefinitely. For someone who becomes hooked on the pleasures of the table that can have dire results. Such was the case with

§ See *Uncle Henry and Aunt Em in Oz*. Editor's note.

the unfortunate Prince Edward. When he came here he was already as big as a house. He threw himself on my mercy and of course we could do no less than take him in. I had to run up the inflatable annex and he moved in there. He never stopped eating though and was soon too big to move. That complicated things worse than ever because, immobile, bored, there was nothing he could any longer do *but* eat. It finally got so bad that we planted sleep poppies outside all the windows. The fumes knocked him out and he's stayed unconscious for two years now. But it's paid off nicely. He's shrunk down beautifully, hasn't he, Lucinda?"

"Yes, and all thanks to our boy," said the proud mother, looking at young Zippiochoggolak fondly. "It's he who thought up the use of the flowers. For the first time Oz's deadly' poppies have done some good."

When the travelers, well weary after the day's exploits, turned in, they all took an interested look at the long-term sleeper. The man was well-nigh buried in a huge mound of material that they could guess was vastly out-size bed-garments, but his face was visible and it was not uncomely: a rosy complexion and long brown eyelashes.

In the event the lodgers were awakened in an unusual way early the next morning. Rod Litenin became conscious of a hand on his shoulder and opened his eyes to see a naked giant standing at his cotside.

"Pardon me, my good man," said the Prince of Wates. "I'm greatly confused. I scarcely know where I am. But I must have assistance. I seem to have been asleep for some considerable time—and have lost weight. I have nothing to cover me. Do you think you might..."

"Right you are!" said the genial Rod and sprang lightly out of the other side of the bed. In a moment he had pulled on his raunchy old trousers and he gestured at the cot. "Lie in there," he invited, "if you can stand the smell. I'll have a word with our host."

So said, so done. Madam Lucinda was already frying

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pancakes in the kitchen when Rod, pulling up his braces, joined her.

"The prince!? Awake? Of course, he would be! wouldn't he, since we closed off the windows on the poppy side and aired out the annex! How silly of us not to have thought of that."

"He's wanting something to put on," explained Litenin. "His pile of bedclothes is too heavy to lift, let alone wear."

"Oh!" The lady paused in thought, her spatula under her arm. "I've already sewn a suit of clothes for him. But we were going to let him shrink another foot or two before waking him up. I'm afraid the garments would never fit. Here!" She handed Rod the pancake turner. "Would you take over?" She rummaged in a drawer for the kitchen shears. "I can run him up a sort of coverall, out of his old bedclothes, to be going on with." She hastened from the room.

'Good thing I got the Prince into my bed,' mused Rod as he dipped batter, 'if she's going to go barging in there.' At this epoch they in Oz were all still laboring under early-twentieth-century standards of prudery.

Half an hour later the company sat down to hot (some of them rather cool by now) cakes and syrup. The revived, and reslimmed, eight-foot Prince of Wates was the star of the entertainment. He ate half the pancakes—or was going to before he remembered that he wasn't going to start all that over again. So he ate only a quarter of them and those he was wished well of by the others, for it was his first meal in more than two years.

"I feel marvelous," he then declared. "So splendid not to have to haul around that tub of lard any longer!"

"'Tub'?" quoted Wammuppirovocuck whimsically. "More like a grain elevator. Maybe you didn't notice the size of your dormitory. The walls were bulging with your bulk when you first went to sleep."

"I do apologize," murmured the Prince. "It was gross of me." Somehow that seemed like the perfect word.

After all, Unc Nunkie continued to keep company—but scarcely pace—with the others as far as the house of ex-General Jinjur far down the road. Despite the approaching loss of the old gentleman the party of animals plus Rod Litenin could take pleasure instead in the company of Edward, Prince of Wates. The prince, apprised of the imminent departure of most of the group among whom he had reawakened, had elected to go with the majority. He expressed infinite gratitude to the wizard Wam and his family but, at least in his own eyes, he had worn out his welcome among them years ago. Besides, he felt obliged to get back to his own home and island realm without delay. Thus, a party of seven had left the purple-blue front door of Wam’s dwelling well before noon.

The prince was wearing a sort of djellabah stitched together by Mrs. Lucinda, in half an hour at the sewing machine, out of a fiftieth of the blue night-shirt he had worn during his years as a sleeping beaut. It was only a makeshift affair but it did have a nice border of gold braid all around the neck opening, to indicate his royal estate. It would have to serve until such time as Prince Edward had leisure to linger in the company of some other capable seamstress. In the meantime he need only watch out not to go up any ladders while anyone stood beneath.

General Jinjur was such a seamstress but the party had no time now for leisurely lingering. They just said “Howdy-do?” and allowed themselves to be pressed to come in for a late lunch. When Jinjur was not leading armies or serving on detached duty as head of the palace guard at Sorceress Glinda’s in the south, she was often at home at her own cottage in the Munchkin country, where she carried on all sorts of womanly occupations such as sewing, gardening, and cooking.

“Wow, that’s some smell,” she commented when she lifted her head from her weeding in the herbaceous borders and sniffed Rod L. coming. “What is it? Dunlop number five?”

Rod took the jest in good part and volunteered to stay outside

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on a garden bench during the lunch that was proffered. But Jinjur wouldn't hear of it. "You'll get soaked," she said. "Look at those clouds." She pointed to a dark mass above the hills that began a mile to the west. "Appears like we're in for a downpour. Still, we need it. It hasn't rained here in weeks."

The newcomer had good reason to suspect his presence had something to do with the unusual cloud formation but he forebore to draw attention to any further characteristic of his that would make him an ever-less welcome guest.

Jinjur was agog to hear all the news that one another of the party could purvey. The group lingered long over the crisp croquettes and the mixed salad from her own garden. The rain hammered down and induced in all the foot passengers a disinclination to go anywhere else just for a while. But when after a particularly loud rush and roar of water they looked out the window and saw the aforesaid garden was missing, they started to worry.

"Great fays!" yelled Jinjur, using an oath she'd picked up at the court of Glinda the Good, and rushed to snatch open the back door. The steps led down to swirling water. "That's usually just a little brook, hardly more than a rivulet, that runs beyond that line of willows!" she explained, pointing to a row of venerable old trees that stood up to their knees in streaming blue water.

It was not raining more heavily than it had done for an hour and the woman protested: "I don't get it! All this water! But I guess the rain must have brought on a landslide in the hills. They're only loose loess, and a rain this heavy is exceptional."

Happily, the house itself did not seem threatened, and by four in the afternoon the flood waters had drained away almost as suddenly as they had appeared. For miles on every side what had been gardens and meadows were a level plain of near-featureless blue mud. Even mannish Jinjur felt herself close to tears at the sight.

Nunculas P. Gennet, greatly forward, patted gently the shoulder of his hostess and she pulled her apron from her face

and looked at him. "I had already," he gravely announced, "determined not to hold my friends back any longer by my slow pace. They're on a mission of assistance they don't want to delay. But I think I see my own mission here. May I help you to restore your grounds to their proper shape? Our little friend Bungle informs me I'll be of no use in the Emerald City for another few days or a week anyway—and I've had a long lifetime of experience at gardening..."

The ex-general was delighted and shook the old gentleman's hand right heartily.

Not long after that, with cordial farewells, the two towering younger men each picked up an animal under each arm and struck out due south, past Shutter Town, where they took care not to disturb the shutter-faced inhabitants, and across blue rivers and a yellow road again. By evening they were at the Munchkin-Quadling border.

c h a p t e r t w e n t y - o n e

Quadlinga, the country, is red in all its manifestations. Its earth is as red as that of Georgia or Greece. It has perennially a red sky in the morning and a red sky at night, and in between a red sun hangs in the south. The Red Ruler lives in her Pink Palace, where, on the basis of the bulletins continually supplied via her Great Book of Records, she issues a daily newsletter which is red throughout her dominions. It is a land of fire, which frequently is seen spewing from the tops of the volcanoes in which the region is rich: Red Mountain, Red-Top Mountain, and the whole volcanic range of (again) the Red Mountains in south-central Quadlinga.

There is no predicting when these mountain cones, as they often do, are going to erupt. The only small harbinger of some early outbreak at the present period was the human weathervane, Rod Litenin, whose presence anywhere usually boded no geophysical good.

Hence, what happened for our wanderers that night came as no great surprise. They followed a rough highland path where the heather grew lavender-pink on every side. They had met no travelers for a long time nor seen any towns or villages since leaving Pineville on the flank of Story-Blossom Mountain some time before. But now came a diversion.

On a steep craggy outcrop on the mountainside ahead rose, under the light of a fitful moon, a ruined castle. It looked as romantic as anyone could wish. In fact, could any of them have known it, the place resembled remarkably, right down to the dark red color, the wrecked castle of Heidelberg on the heights above the Neckar.

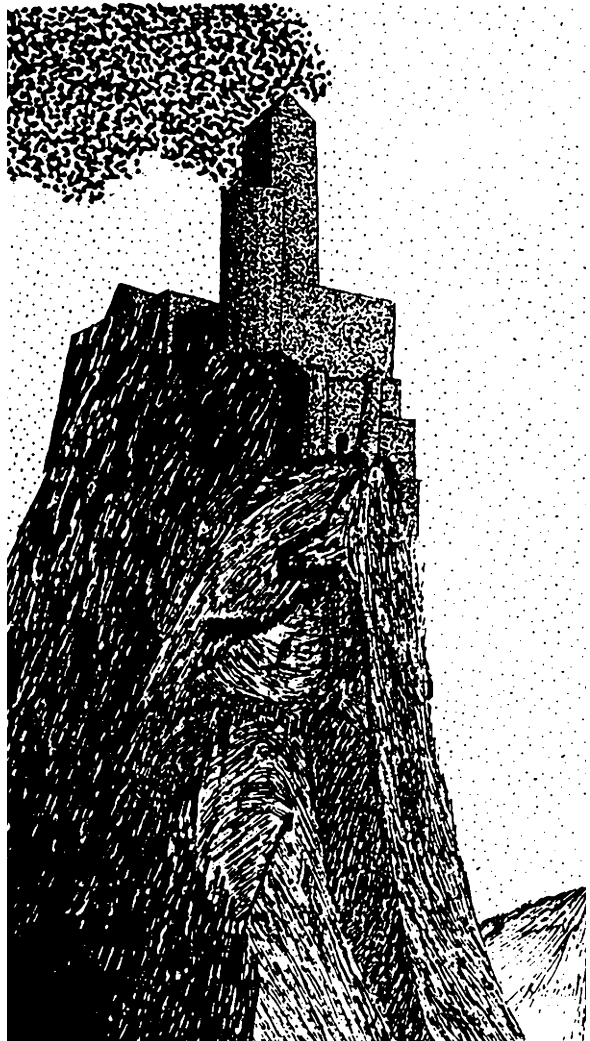
A very faint path led off toward the pile from the track they followed along the highland valley bottom. Something moved Rod Litenin to suggest they take it. "We're getting back in the direction of our Anti-Magic Co-op. People around here—if there are any—might know something about it." The others didn't need much persuading. A haven for the night

would be welcome.

As the party went up the path the way grew every moment more forbidding. Soon red brambles blocked the route. They had to scramble over red boulders as every trace of a trodden walkway was lost. But still the red tower would reappear anon in the moonlight and beckon them on. But *red* moonlight? No, even the rosy Quadling country doesn't run to that. In addition to the low moonglow from the east the travelers soon descried as well a sky-illuminating red suffusion from another source.

At last the two tall men with their animal freight stood in a redthorn thicket directly under the soaring red rock wall of the fortress and looked up. Never had any of them been in a scene of such desolation before. Crimson Virginia creepers climbed the wall but surely nothing else ever had or could. All was solemn silence. Just once a woodpecker, red-headed, no doubt, hammered—but on what invisible tree?

Was the ruined keep totally



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uninhabited? It would appear so; and yet clear-sighted Edward of Wates saw something—which the animals at once confirmed: it was a pane of glass, unbroken, sealing a deep recess sixty feet up.

How to make contact with someone who conceivably might be lodged beyond the window? Pebbles thrown up was the first idea, but they hardly liked to run even the remote risk of breaking that remarkably preserved pane. The animals offered a barking-snarling-gruzzing routine on the order of the performance of the wise beasts of Bremen. In the end, however, Rod Litenin thought his baritone would carry as well as the animal chorus.

Nor did he just yell. Something made him take from his pocket another old volume: *Half Hours With the Poets*, and riffle until he found a lyric that seemed to fit the case. Rod often set verse to tune just for the fun of it, and he did so now.

“Come to thy window, dame, and light the day.
That day is dark and we have lost our way.
Night comes apace and we would have a charm
To guard us in dark hours against harm.
A cheerful glass, a cozy cup, a light?
Some talisman afford us! some delight
Which we, rememb’ring, can be strengthened by
As on we blunder under a black sky.”

They all strained their eyes in the deep red dark and then, just as the last sung words rang out, the window, all dark rose facing that belated ‘sunset’ west, trembled outwards.

A woman’s face appeared, nearly obscured by her deep-carmine hair. A voice, also deep and dark-red, was heard.

“Who be ye?”

“Wayfarers, harmless ones, benighted,” called Rod. “Can you take us in?”

“Oh, would that it were possible!” cried the woman. “But no—oh, no! it cannot be. I grieve...”

“Don’t grieve,” advised the wanderer jauntily. “Just come down and let us in. We guarantee we’re inoffensive travelers... carrying no weapons...”

"I believe you! Even should I not, your presence would be infinitely welcome. But I—am a prisoner. I cannot leave my solitary room! Nor is there anyone I can summon."

This information caused the otherwise lighthearted travelers to grow solemn. Had they stumbled, all unexpectedly, upon tragedy?

It was impossible, without screaming themselves hoarse, to get a coherent account of the woman's situation but this much the wanderers gathered before they gave up attempts to talk and moved to action: the prisoner was one of noble origin who had been abandoned to her fate many years before, left indeed to starve if, in the meantime, deathlessness had not pervaded the enchanted country, so that now she still lived; but so gaunt and weak she could do nothing to help herself.

"This is most dreadful," Prince Edward expressed to his companions the general view. "Clearly our duty here is more urgent even than you others' quixotic undertaking to bring help to the china country. We must camp in this place and think of some way—"

"For starters," volunteered the pink kitten, "I'll run up the wall and see how the land lies. Those creepers ought to bear my weight." She looked at her co-feline but the Glass Cat merely raised her eyebrows.

"Try scrambling up that wall? My pink brains inform me that would not be the brightest. One slip and I'd be shattered on the rocks."

Nor did the others urge her. They were all sensible enough not to demand useless sacrifices, no matter how solidaritous such might attractively appear.

While Eureka nimbly clawed her way up to the tower window the Woozy made himself useful by getting someone to say "Krizzle-kroo", whereupon his eyes shot sparks and set fire to the bracken roundabout. The others brought dead branches from a nearby thicket and fed the fire, which was serviceable not so much for warmth as to see by in the only faintly rose-tinted night.

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Presently the pink kitten returned with a more comprehensive story. "That's the Lady Stella Barr-Tau—" she began.

"Rhymes with 'now'?" said Rod Litenin, taking great interest.

"That's right. She claims to be of royal birth! Old Mr. Nunculas would know of her. It seems she suffered a fate similar to his. In the old warring days, before the fairies put a stop to such goings-on and established Ozma on the throne, this was the principality of Barr. Nothing but ruins left now and nobody remaining of the old princely family, it seems, except just this lady. She says she has no idea how long she's been imprisoned in the tower but since long before the spell of immortality was cast over Oz. She's... not young."

That fact did not of course lessen Eureka's listeners' interest in the prisoner's romantic fate. "Who's young?" poohpoohed the wanderer Rod. "I dare say all of us are older than we look."

"She's existed here, all alone, for years and years," the kitten resumed. "She says she would have lost her mind permanently except for her music. She has some battered old music books and a couple of instruments.

"But what are we going to do to help her?"

Nobody had any good ideas. The men had long since circled the tower, stumbling over wreckage of adjoining buildings that had fallen down, and discovering a stairwell leading upward. But its wooden treads had long ago rotted and tumbled, and now thistles blocked the entrance.

Their only solace as they made camp for the night was that the weather was dry. They would presumably not be rained on as they shivered under the blue blanket the Wammuppirovocucks had provided for the journey. Rod sang an envoi to the lost Lady Stella before they all went to rest: something about not despairing in the dark, because tomorrow could not help but come.

But before tomorrow came something else. The kitten noticed it first, her whiskers trembled, and she hissed to her glass fellow, "Did you feel that?"

The cat was nonchalant. "Mm, an earth tremor. Par for the course. An earthquake or an eruption. Take your pick. *That's* what's making that red glow."

Eureka chose the latter, just because a violent rumble was heard and the strange pinkness in the northwestern sky was suddenly strengthened into a brighter effulgence. "Help!" she screamed and everybody woke who wasn't awake already. The Woozy's three tail hairs quivered febrilly and the two china dogs looked bewildered.

Rod took efficient charge as usual, collecting animals right and left, as Prince Edward grabbed the blanket into a ball. "Better refuge south, sir!" suggested Rod but the valiant prince held back because of the lady in the tower.

"What of her?!"

"When we've got you and the animals to safety at least from falling castle walls—I'll come back. She won't be alone... at the end. Make for those heights in the southeast! They're not volcanic. That should be safe."

Litenin carried the porcelain dogs while the others scampered on ahead. He left them in a rocky, open field a third of a mile away and raced back.

In the ruddy glow that was every moment brighter he could see the Lady Stella at her wide-thrown window. "I crave your pardon!" called the distracted man. "This is my fault!"

"How so?" came a merely sad and weary voice.

"I attract these things! If there's an earthquake or a tornado in the vicinity I'll catalyse it."

"A bad habit," cried the woman whimsically. "Can you not break yourself of it? But in truth, I take, rather, the blame myself."

"Why?" yelled Rod from far below.

"I'm called 'the Lady of Bad 'Cess', didn't you know? If anything can fail, it will fail for me. Isn't it just like me for this to happen when I was on the point of being rescued?"

"It's a point of likeness between us! Never mind; we'll share the blame. But now to save you! Have you anything up there that will serve for a rope?"

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"Alas. If I had I'd have used it long ago. There's nothing... nothing but my hair! It's twenty feet long. I've had nothing to cut it with. Shall I play Rapunzel?" Stella's whimsy persisted in spite of fireballs that shot through the sky and landed behind screens of forest far away.

"There've always been too many holes in that story for my taste," called Rod. "Climbing up the lady's hair would pull her out of the window before the lover ever got three feet up. Think of another."

"I'm sorry. I have no spells or charms... Shall I throw myself into your arms?"

"And cripple both of us? We can't be killed in Oz but *could* live on in pain and misery the rest of our endless days. We'll save that plan only as a last resort. The fire *may* not come this far..."

But when an explosion louder than all the rest split the sky Rod wasn't so sure. A vast piece of the volcano mountainside was seen to turn over and over through the red air, infinitely slowly, then land upon the remote forest, which instantly burst into flames. At the same time a rumble, low but of immense strength, was heard. Rod had only one terrified instant to see a great earth-crack split the thicket to the northwest and run under the red tower. He passed out as an avalanche of ancient bricks and mortar slid quite quietly to the ground.

However, for once the two star-crossed ones had the advantage of a bit of good 'cess.

The half of the tower that had fallen was the farther half. Rod Litenin was uninjured, not marked by so much as the scratch of a brick-chip. More wonderful to relate: nor was the lady of the tower. The survivor below peered up through the swirls of mortar dust and saw her face at the embrasure, radiant.

"A miracle," she called. "The farther wall of my room has fallen. Through the dust I can see the stars!"

"Truly!" the man yelled back, "a miracle. Wait! I'll try to get up to you!"

“No. You can’t!” she cried as loud, but that was too much, and she fell to coughing. He waited.

Finally in a strangled voice, “Take my lute!” she pleaded. Amazed, he saw her lift through the opening with bone-thin arms a pot-bellied instrument, and he ran to stand under the fire-red wall.

The thing fell and somehow he managed to grasp it in its flight before it shattered on the stones. “Next my harp!” she begged. But that was no go. In her state the harp was too heavy for her to hold sufficiently far beyond the sill. “No,” she wept. “No.”

Lady Stella’s hands and head were withdrawn; she was lost to her would-be rescuer’s sight. He clambered over more anciently fallen stones to the scree of new-descended brick debris. By the effulgence of volcanic light he could see the jumble of red and pink of bricks and rock rising in a nearly even slope to the very brink of a broken floor. And there was the lady herself; in a red dress that was one long ravel of shreds, she crawling and slipping, back outward, down the loose stone-slide. Her immense mound of hair appeared tied to her head by a band of fabric that might have been torn from a bed garment. Out of it stuck incongruously a thick stick.

Rod Litenin ran and threw himself high and higher upon the rubble. His hand straining upward grasped hers groping down.

c h a p t e r t w e n t y - t w o

Having carried the wing warning to all lepidoptera atop Yip Mountain, as well as to other insects who might be inclined to pass the helpful word, Swen Swan and his tiny passenger turned back northeastward, and were thrilled when they spotted the Truth Pond gleaming yellowly beneath them.

They'd managed to get a sip at rivulets, and once at a tiny spring, in that arid area of western Winkieland but this was the first body of water the swan could really flop down in and have a good bath. Being honest creatures without guilty secrets or hidden hypocrisies, and not lying under any unnatural spells, bird and insect never even realized it was a truth pond they splashed about in. They just thought the water felt fresh and frank and tasted uncorrupted; however, they did notice that the basin was laid out on the square.

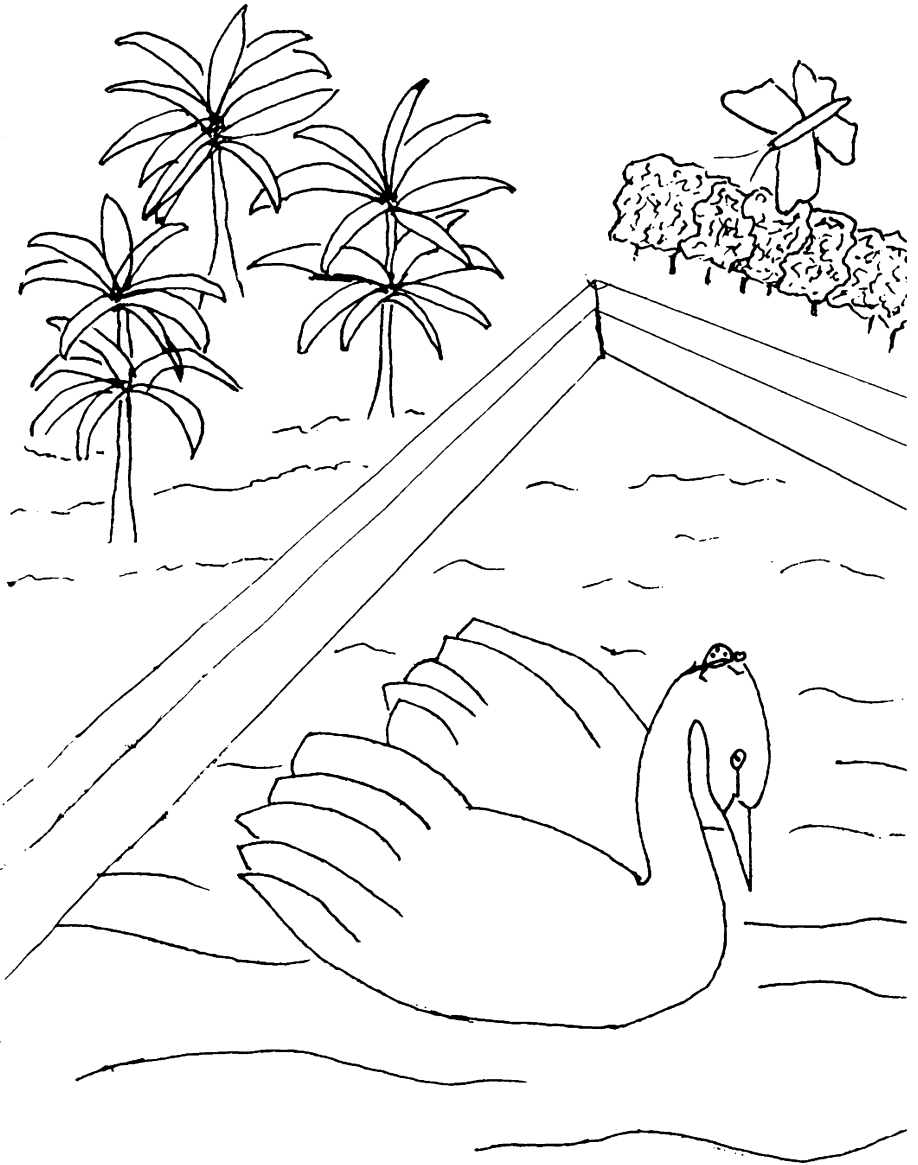
There Lurabelle and Swen lingered the rest of the day but they made a very early start next morning.

This proved to be the busiest of the busy days of their journey. They had no sooner got well aloft than they sighted a great congregation of yellow pierids resting on a damp sandbank downstream of the little run-off from the pond. "Gee," said the ladybeetle, "I've never seen so many butterflies all together in one place before. Funny, isn't it? They're all just standing there with their wings folded up high. Wonder what they're doing."

"Most likely just keeping out of each other's way," opined the swan. "If they opened out their wings, close together as they are, they'd get hopelessly tangled up. There wouldn't be room to move."

"I'll jump off here, Swen," instructed the beetle. "Want to wait for me under that cottonwood tree down there?"

Then the busy bug flew among the forest of yellow wings and spread her warning. The congregating lepidopts took instant alarm and rose up in a cloud, saying they'd alert any number of Apollos, OrangeTips, Brimstones, and Cabbage Butterflies they knew to infest the area. "And there's a colony of Hummingbird Hawkmoths



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who hang out just this side of the Winkie Woods," they informed. "They're quite spectacular yellow-wings, who'd attract the attention of these insect murderers more than most. Maybe you'd like to go on there to pass the word? And thanks ever so!"

The envoys of emergency did as suggested and, when they had got the wind properly up the hawkmoths flew on swiftly to the Trick River, where Swen Swan descended for another brief and well-earned rest. The bird took no notice of the stream's tendency to switch back and forth in direction of flow. He could lift into the air whenever he liked and leave the silly thing behind.

"—Although," said Lurabelle Ladybird, following up some private train of thought, "actually the *moths*, I suppose, are scarcely at risk. They distinctly said it was a 'butterfly' this Ojo character wanted a wing of."

"Never mind," said the swan, who seemed to have odd little resources of recondite information. "If I know humans, it's no bad idea to let also the moths know about the danger. It's my experience that average humans know moths in two connections only: as creatures whose larvae feed on stored garments or as insects that blunder into lamps and lit candles by night. If they see a showy daytime moth fluttering in a garden they're going to call it a butterfly sure as anything, and then its wings are just as fair game as its cousins'."

"I think you're right," agreed Lurabelle. "Just as well that we've been warning everybody along the way who had anything in common with the ephemerals: the lepidoptera, of course, and then the bees, gnats, hornets, wasps, flies, earwigs, locusts and other grasshoppers, ticks, roaches, fleas, ants, arachnids, weevils, mosquitoes, termites, and crickets, not to mention all my own relatives the beetles. I think we've just about covered the field. What do you think? Anything more to be done?"

"I guess not," considered Swen. "So...? Shall we be winging home again? I must confess I'm getting anxious to see my family."

And so they did—or meant to. After about an hour's further flight they had a diversion when, at the place where the river they followed joined another flowing from the north, they sighted something gleaming and sparkling alluringly in the distance.

"What do you suppose that is?" whistled onward-winging Swen, glancing to the left.

"Let's go see," shrieked Lurabelle. "Our mission's about completed; we can spare a half hour."

It didn't take nearly that long for the swift swan to reach and circle the shining tin towers of the castle of the Emperor of the Winkies. "What do you suppose it is?" he wondered again.

Lurabelle L. couldn't tell him. That it was a castle and that it was made of tin-plated steel were facts that were obvious, but what the building was in aid of, standing there alone between a tiny village and a biggish pond, was not at once clear. The travelers' curiosity was piqued.

Swen Swan belly-flopped on the pond. "Maybe you'd like to go see?" he guessed. A swan couldn't stroll into a castle without, probably, ending up on the dinner table. Strange rumors had reached the animal world of what people who lived in palaces would eat: peafowls, nightingales, larks' tongues. But a ladybeetle could go anywhere with no questions asked. Pleasing word had reached the *human* world, even the dullest of its inhabitants, about how harmless, useful, and also charming ladybird beetles were.

Lurabelle was gone the prescribed half hour, during which time Swen enjoyed himself, finding curious things to eat in various mucks beneath the pool. The beetle too had lunched well, about the stems of a geranium on a window ledge in the castle kitchens. But she returned breathless and excited.

"Oh, quick, my dear friend!" she cried, perching on the swan's bill. "The castle cook came in while I was there and I couldn't help overhearing what she said to the under-butler. I found out this place is the seat of a tin emperor—though how an emperor could serve under a princess or queen as ruler of a mere section

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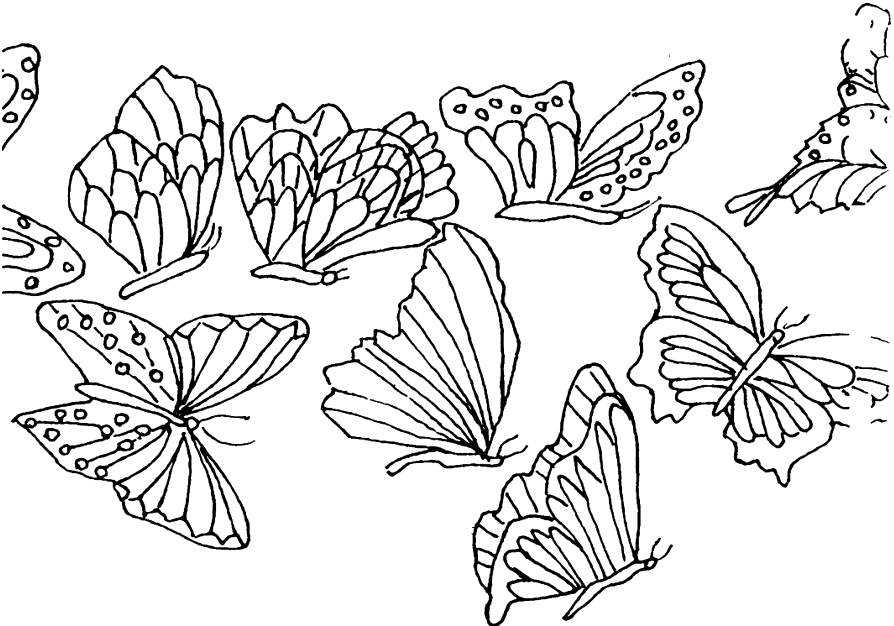
of her kingdom I'm not sure. Anyway, it seems he went away early this morning together with some people who'd been visiting here. And guess who one of them was!"

"Do tell."

"Ojo! A boy named 'Ojo'." The ladybird paused for effect. "Now you know there couldn't be two people with such an odd name. It must be our villain! But the thing is: they were heading back toward the Emerald City. So their safari must be over! But I couldn't make out from what Fregosa said—that's the cook: pleasant fat woman—whether Ojo had murdered a butterfly, after all our precautions, or if that's still to come. I think we must pursue them, quickly, and find out!"

"Right you are," concurred the swan, nothing loth to be hurrying over the last lap of the long journey.

He lifted off the little lake and stretched his wings to capacity. Lurabelle Ladybug was nearly blown off half a dozen times. She couldn't keep her eyes buried in Swen's neck feathers but had to remain on the lookout for walking boys on the brick road below: yellow, of course, in Winkieland, but whether Yellow the beetle had no conception.

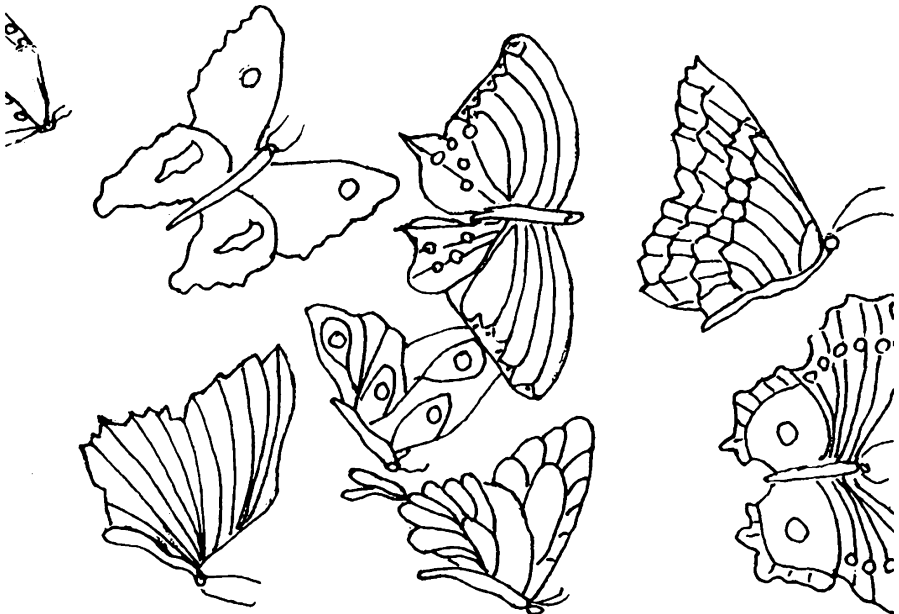


The yellow land was soon left behind. Now all was green beneath. On the eastern horizon something was beginning to sparkle and gleam. Could it be the sheen of millions of faceted and polished emeralds?!

No boy, however, was espied, with or without an unspecified number of companions. Instead Lurabelle rubbed her eyes: what was that ahead and far below? Something of amorphous shape that constantly seemed to *change* shape but always moving, if slowly, forward. Then as her steed flew swiftly nearer she saw a crowd, a host, of golden butterflies.

“Oh, Swen, slow down;” she yelled. “Go down! I’ve got to speak to that bunch!”

Yes! Along the road, beneath the trees, fluttering and dancing in the breeze, were a vast congregation of lepidoptera and not just golden ones either but with a generous admixture of pink, green and blue. Continuous as the stars that shine they stretched in never-ending line. Ten thousand saw she at a glance, tossing their wings in sprightly dance!



c h a p t e r t w e n t y - t h r e e

"I lived for art," she said. "I lived for love."

The Lady Stella Barr-Tau coughed and sighed. They were sitting in the red darkness on the stony waste with nothing for their comfort but the dusty blanket. She hardly spoke above a whisper but that was sufficient, now that the fireworks of the terrible night seemed virtually to be past. Now there was, again, just the diminishing glow in the northwestern sky.

"And then I lived for life. For a time anyway. My very early childhood was placid and it was then, I think, I formed the habit of optimism or—or acceptance, or whatever it is which has seen me through so much. Resignation?"

Her listeners said nothing, just hung on every word. You could hear them breathing in the dark.

"I early found that I loved music, nor was there anything in those days to prevent my having instruction. I lived for that: to play and sing. I could sing in those days. Now it's just a croak." But those who heard her did not agree. There was something thrilling in the timbre of her dark voice. Still, it might be true that she could not sing. Speaking and singing voices so rarely went together, and prima donna had been known to *talk* in what was no better than a modified screech or growl.

"My brother loved music too. How often in the old happy days at Silver Street would we perform together. But he was no more than fifteen when he disappeared. Just like that; from one day to the next. My father also. Darkness came down. It was really never lifted afterwards. But my mother was spared to me: for many years, in fact, until death claimed her.

"Long she tried to keep from me what was happening. I showed no sign of caring for high place and perhaps she thought that would be my protection.

"Eventually, in one way or another, I found out. Partly through the talk of servants, shameful though that be. My father's cousin had seized the throne. Whoever had a claim on that throne must be regarded as deadly peril to the usurper. All the males

of our family were lured away, and lost. I never learned the details. Did they die soon or late? perhaps not at all? I don't know. I used to play that they were but in exile and one day would return. It is long since that thought comforted me."

"But how did you live, Lady Barr-Tau?" put in Rod Litenin, much moved. "I mean—"

"'Lady Stella', if you will," instructed the dame. "Or simply 'Barr-Tau'. I am the Barr-Tau now, of course, since all the men are gone. How I lived? For art. I was composing now as well, perhaps just to be able to pass the endless days.

"As for the mere mechanics, we lived on the alms of our servitors. They were loyal, and supplied us from the farms round about. That was in the days before the war, of course."

"The war?" said all the hearers. That most terrible and romance-invoking of all words. Perhaps, deepest down, we are motivated to war just to insure that lives be leavened by romance. A woman may, for example, live a whole life on the romance of a lover lost at war, where the same man's death in a traffic accident would merely have been sordid.

"Yes. Oz was wracked by wars and pestilence, famine and fire. Well, we appear not to be shirking fire right now. But then whole nations died, it seemed. You've never heard of the barony of Barr?"

"Well, 'heard', your ladyship," put in the Prince of Wates. "Certainly we on the isle of Gumm have *heard*—but it was all so long ago..."

"Yes. So long ago," said the lady wistfully. "So many years. So many decades. So many—"

"'Decades', Barr-Tau?" put in Rod Litenin (speaking vocatively correctly). "But you are not old enough—"

"Older than you perceive," she said. "Don't forget: for a long time now we of Oz have enjoyed unagingness. Even before that I daily invoked the charm against growing older. So much magic had we even at Barr-Tau. As for myself, I weened I had enough to contend with without adding on-creeping senility to the score."

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“What did Your Ladyship—?” said the life-sized pug.

“—have to contend with? Listen and you shall hear.

“Some time had passed, some years perhaps, since our menfolk had gone and no more returned. We heard nothing. Then suddenly one day a ‘royal’ company arrived at the castle. We: my mother and I, were summoned to court! We soon realized that this was a ploy merely to have an eye kept upon us, who thitherto had been merely forgotten. As for our own feelings: who could desire to go to the court of a foul usurper?

“And yet I did. Can you guess why?”

The question was rhetorical but the Woozy answered. “You lived for art! At court you would have a chance to practise and to play.”

“Well guessed, my friend,” agreed the lady. “But no, that could have been only partly why. ‘I lived for art.’ Yes. But more: I lived for love. In the party that came to fetch us: leading it, indeed, was a young prince who was only fairer than the morning star. Can you not picture that I should fall in love: I had been starved so long for company and affection, at any rate the company and affection of those of the other sex.

“Perhaps, in fact, my prince was not *so* fair. But so charming! Of course he was paid to be so. I knew that already at the start. I resisted with woman’s force during the first days of our horse-borne return to the palace of his master. Yet when one so singlemindedly sets out to court your favor, can you resist? Especially when, if all things were equal, it is what you would most wish in the world?

“It was all according to plan. The cruel ‘king’—so he styled himself—had made of the lowly nobleman, Sir Figuera, a ‘prince’ and heaped honors upon him. Figuera was to be his creature; that was understood. Now he was to marry me, for reasons of state merely. I was to be kept close, that I might not make a match: elsewhere and, if ever so remotely, threaten the usurper’s position.

“All would have been well; that is to say, ill, for me and

mine, if the prince had not been so persuasive. It flattered his vanity that I at least, of us two, should marry for love. Throughout our journey—of a week, for it was winter, the snow deep, and our progress slow—he wooed me right ardently. How could I, I say, resist? It was the thing I wanted; to enter a heart where it was wanted and not to leave again.

“I entered his heart. Ah, that was not according to plan. But he was too persuasive. While he convinced me that he loved me he also unfortunately convinced himself. Your great persuaders’ talents work first and foremost upon themselves. By the time we rode into the usurper’s yard we were two people in love.

“The betrothal was celebrated with great magnificence. That, though, was as far as it went. The marriage never took place. The usurper had achieved his ends. I was now the publicly proclaimed property of his henchman. I was well in check; no further legality need take place. For the ‘king’ did not intend that by our true marriage Figuera would become the Barr-Tau and himself a potential threat. We were held suspended: not unmarried and not married.”

“An unfortunate situation, surely,” said Rod, just to be saying something sympathetic. “How long—”

“Things went on so for years. Yet I might not have been wholly unhappy. I had my love and we had license to come to each other. I myself had no yearning for the title of ‘Princess’ and less a longing for power and authority. I lived for love.

“Not so my poor weak ambitious betrothed. His loyalty to the usurper had at once turned to enmity but he had not the strength of purpose to do anything about it. Not for a long time. The ‘king’ had wars but Figuera was kept at court. The usurper knew that military gifts belonged not to my lover. I said years passed away, years that aged my pretty youth—but still I loved him!—as he needs must smile daily in the king’s council, yet hate him in his heart.

“Then the tide of hostilities went against the usurper. Armies pressed us from two sides. Figuera and I with our

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small retinue fled to Barr-Tau, here to cower—and to plot. The invaders could not know we welcomed them, and therefore we must fear them, but we did not hate them. We hated the usurper! Alas, Figuera was not clever in strategy. We plotted—*he* plotted, but, ineptly. The king was warned. In his reverses he and his force fell back upon Barr-Tau.

“If the tyrant could not prevail against his external enemies he could at least take vengeance on the disaffected in his own party. My affianced and I were brought before the cruel one in the room of state. Our crimes were read out to us there. My husband—so I regarded him—my darling wept. Yet he had pride sufficient not to grovel, not to plead.

“Thereafter he was torn to pieces before mine eyes. Quite... small... pieces. I remember his left hand which had been so graceful. Amid the gore I saw his nose: so straight and beautiful as it had been. They forced me to hold in my spread hands a part of my friend’s flesh I had never seen before.

“I had thought of myself as tough-minded. Conditioned, you know, by so many years of adversity. But when upon my shrinking hands was thrown that dripping and still warm fragment of my lover’s life I lost my mind.

“They carried me away unconscious to a strongroom in a tower. There I lay for many weeks. When I awoke I gibbered, though otherwise I did not speak. My mother attended. So passed the years away. She died. It was a faithful retainer who found me one day humming a tune. Later I began to sing a little. But the years and the neglect and also the dampness, the poor food, had taken their toll. My voice was gone. There was only the modulated croaking you hear now.”

The lady’s listeners were too aghast to make any comments. She went on. “Time and the peaceful dullness restored my mind, I suppose. At first when my perceptions cleared I could remember nothing of the horrors. Later, little by little, recollection came back, but as of something that might have happened to another: dreadful but somehow not... personal.

“The old wars had echoed away like fading thunder. The usurper was gone. The kingdom itself was gone. Only I lingered on like some old ghost. For years now I have existed solitarily in the keep. Kindly peasants sometimes put bread in a basket and I would haul it up. I remembered that trick from early times. And there I lived on—‘for art’. What was there else to live for? I had my virginals—how ironic that word—and my lute.

“Until you—and the earthquake—came...”

c h a p t e r t w e n t y - f o u r

The lady's first need was sustenance. Rod Litenin took from the croker sack some stale buns they had gathered from a thicket of bun-bushes the day before yesterday. She ate them all and wanted more.

In fact, the food did its job and in a little while the Lady Stella could affirm that, aside from stiffness and awkwardness from so many years of no other exercise than a pacing of her tower chamber could afford, she felt herself fit; feeble from such long starvation but—in Oz!—not actually unhealthy. She declared herself ready for whatever now might come in consequence of her miraculous release from confinement, *peine et dure*.

"I did not dream, in those years," she essayed to jest, "that I would live to be grateful to a volcano."

"Nor ever I," returned Rod in matching quaint language, "that I should be thankful for having set one off. I've always had to be apologizing for fires and floods. This is the first time—"

The lady looked puzzled but of course the wanderer could not say more without risking seeming to brag. It was the Glass Cat who nominated herself spokesanimal and told the tale, with flourishes, of the man's strange aptitude. The Barr-Tau marveled, not only to hear of her rescuer's character but to hear it from the mouth of a cat and a glass one at that. Magic had not been usual in the remote and rural barony of Barr of ancient times.

"And now," as smoky day dawned recalled the Prince of Wates, "our quest? Are we to resume it, or...?"

Looking for some vanished china ornaments did strike a trivial note in contrast to the terrors the company had just heard described.

But... "Not a bit of it!" said Lady Stella stoutly when they had related the tale of the little people from the Dainty China Country and their (presumed) sad fate. "The life of any living thing is as precious to it as any other life is to its liver. Can we say that *any* particular life more deserves to be lived to its end

than another? Even if life has been frivolously given. My memory of how cruelly it can be *taken* makes me the more forward to urge that you go on with your quest to restore life to creatures who may yet have a chance of retrieving it... Nothing can bring back my Figuera."

Rod Litenin could not resist laying a hand to comfort on the shoulder of the shivering, woman. Then that also reminded him of priorities. That shoulder was but barely clad in thread-thin sarsenet. "My dear, you must have clothes," he said.

The others overheard. Curiously, that admonition was the thing that brought home finally to the party the realization of how much the nature of their excursion had changed. What had started as a high-spirited lark had taken on successive layers of earnestness. Now the sobriety of what must be their undertaking outweighed the fun. Yet the animals and their human friends were not so light-minded that they would not face the challenge.

"We're going to need help," the China Dog expressed the general view. "I think we ought to hurry to the capital of the great local sorceress and ask for magic assistance. There too the Lady Stella can find rest and a haven."

"Oh, but I've rested, perforce, all these—centuries," blurted the Barr-Tau. (They might as well know, first as last.) "I would like so much to assist—to take part in real life again."

The others required no further urging. Shaking from them the weariness of their night of wakefulness and worry, they cheered the lady for her pluck and then made ready to depart. That was no complicated procedure. Rod, after stowing animals in his pockets, had only to lift his sack. Lady Stella reached for her lute but Prince Edward offered to relieve her of that load and gave his arm as well for a support. That left, of impedimenta, just the flute. Up to this the lady had been wearing it in her hair: a sort of variant on the Japanese combstick. Now she took it down, fingered the holes, laid the instrument's end to her lips, and blew out a jaunty hornpipe (variations on the celebrated theme of "Romance Will Save the World").

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All the company felt bucked at once. They marched out dapperly. Up to the end of the mountain valley went they. There, with a last glance back to the red ruins of the castle of Barr-Tau, they crossed the ridge and descended to the plateau. Upon it, in the distance, glowered, they knew, the sombre heath which had witnessed their change of goal the week before.

In two hours the party had regained the crossroads where stood the AntMagCoop. "The procedure as before?" suggested Litenin. "Everybody who's any way affected by magic had better stay outside." For the benefit of the newcomers he elaborated: "The shop specializes in devices for doing away with magic and its effects. If someone's under any kind of spell (and prefers it that way) it could be dangerous to go inside. It's possible the fiery atmosphere of the place would do away with charms, as—pardon the sally!—it certainly has dispersed with charm."

"Well," said Lady Stella, greatly dubious, "I don't know. To survive as long as I have done argues the influence of enchantment. We used the youth-preserving routine daily, as a matter of course, but after all that was not a wholly natural process..."

"And I," offered the Prince, "—to grow as big as six houses and live to tell the tale. There is a very large proportion of rubber in our protoplasm and that—"

"Is there indeed?" broke in Rod, greatly caught by the datum.

"Yes, certainly," assured Prince Edward.

"And yet you don't smell at all rubbery."

"Certainly *not*," protested the prince. "We're very careful to stay away from fire. It's only when we scorch that there's the least bit of a tell-tale scent."

"Gosh," said Rod. "I don't even need scorching to get to smelling high. The smallest thing seems to set me off—if in fact the stink ever stops at all."

"Oh, Mr. Rod," reminded Toby, the pug, "you told us your

haunting fragrance was just left over from the burning of your shop, Rubber World."

Rod Litenin blushed to his boots. "That was eight years ago. I lied. I've always smelt like this. It was to *cover* the odor that I started up the rubber shop in the first place. Now you know my terrible secret."

Stella Barr-Tau was staring at them in incomprehension. "What are you all on about?"

She stepped to the side of the hang-dog hobo, Rod. "This gentleman?" She leaned to him and drew a breath. "Just nothing at all. There is no smell. Or if there were it would be of hyacinths! —Or perhaps the breeze off a high mountain meadow."

c h a p t e r t w e n t y - f i v e

Rod Litenin, his head in a whirl, virtually stumbled into the Anti-Magic Cooperative. "Have a care, sir!" barked the young woman behind the counter. "No access here to persons under the influence," she commanded as the man continued to weave ever so slightly.

"Under the influence?" repeated Rod, dazed. "Yes, sure!" he said. "Of love! I've just met the most wonderful woman in the world!"

"No doubt," said the girl, with lips severely turned down. "But otherwise, have you business here?... Wait now; I think I recognize you. Were you not here last week?" She sniffed suddenly. "In fact, you left something behind," she went on, essaying what might have been grim wit. "A haunting fragrance, if I remember rightly."

She reached beneath the counter and brought out a flit-gun, which she handled smartly to send a cloud of pink musk-scented spray wafting through the room. This was the more difficult as, attached to the gun, was a little china boy.

Rod Litenin's eyes grew round. While enjoying the change from his usual awareness of personal b.o., he yet was more impressed to recognize in the shop assistant's hands the engine for the destruction Purp, the (other) China Dog, had told of as happening thirteen years before. "That spray gun, ma'am!" he stammered. "That's why I've come back. Have you got any more pieces like that?!"

"The gun? Why, no." The clerk reflected. "We just keep it for the odd deodorizing job. We don't need more than one. Actually, it's a bit awkward to handle, with the figurine attached. But we've found we can't separate them without breaking the one or the other."

"No, I mean the china figure itself. Could you tell me: where did it come from?"

"This little figure? Why, I've no idea. It was included in the inventory from the old shop when AntMagCoop took over, so

I'm told. We discovered that the gun originally held a demagicifying solution and it came in very handy in disinfecting all the magic paraphernalia the old place was cluttered with. When it ran out we subsistuted a cartridge of ordinary scent spray." (This was in the days before they discovered that aerosols were as dangerous as magic, if not more so.)

"That inventory," pursued Rod. "There were other china pieces? What happened to them?"

"Why, there are some still about," answered the woman, taken aback. "We give them as door prizes—as you know. You received—oh, yes, the little purple dog that had been gathering dust here for ages. Wait, I think there's a piece or two right here... That's right."

She brought forth a statuette, gave it a flick with a cloth, and set it on the counter. "It's a little charwoman. See her mop and pail? But I think—yes, that's the last one. If you take it, we'll be down to just this bundle of old deactivated magic wands for bonus gifts."

"But the rest!" enquired the customer anxiously. "There were fourteen or fifteen pieces originally," he explained, to the salesgirl's wonderment. "They were a set. Do you mean they were all given away piecemeal to chance customers?!"

"Well, now that I come to think of it, no. Most of them were shipped off, along with the rest of the old magic junk, to the sorceress who was in charge of the magic clean-up throughout southern Oz."

"That would be—"

"Glinda, the Good Witch of the South!" said customer and clerk together.

c h a p t e r t w e n t y - s i x

“Bettina! My dear. Is that you?”

The tiny ladybug was tossed and buffeted among the fluttering wings of many butterflies. Times like this you might think there was *one* wing to spare, and all this trouble could be saved.

“Lurabelle!?” a voice called back. “Where are you?”

“Here somewhere! There are so many of you I can’t keep you in sight. At this moment I’m just east of three Green Bandeds—now there are four of them—no, two! But I’m sure I caught a glimpse of you.”

“Fly to the ground!” called Bettina Butterfly. “We’ll meet there. Oh, what a crowd! Dora, make them give way!” she commanded her adjutant.

Suddenly butterfly and beetle met face to face in the immediate vicinity of some dandelions in flower. Each took a seat on a bloom and turned to flutter her wings into place and gasp a bit.

“Is it really you?” each marveled. “I wondered if we’d ever meet again! How did it go? And how did you get here?”

Lurabelle told of the Swans’ generous offer and briefly of her mission round Winkieland. “I think I can safely say that not a single butterfly has yet been de-winged in any of the regions we visited. But how did you make out?”

“Like a house afire. As you can see,” declared Miss Butterfly with a moue of modesty and waved an antenna at the cloud of fritillaries that was drifting on up the road in the air above them. “A lot of them felt if they stuck close to me they’d be safe. But I’m afraid it’s slowed down my progress. As you see, we haven’t even got as far as the yellow country yet. At least, we did! but something came up and I turned back across the Emerald border again. I forget... but there were so many of us to be warned...”

‘Just like a butterfly,’ thought Lurabelle. ‘They can’t keep their minds on business.’ Aloud she said, “It was just the *yellow* ones who were at risk, you know,” and hoped she didn’t sound just the least bit tart.

“Oh, I know!” cried Bettina apologetically. “But the Rose Featherwings were so eager to join the crusade! I hadn’t the heart to say no. And then the Green Bandeds started following us. But we did cross the frontier yesterday and I was able to let ever so many Clouded Sulfurs know about the threat. But you see, they all began refugeeing east—that was it!—and naturally all the pinks and greens flocked after them and I don’t know; somehow I got carried along...”

Lurabelle Lady-insect didn’t have the heart to go on being cross. “Never mind, Bettina. No harm done,” she said. “There’s a fifty-fifty chance no butterfly anywhere has yet been martyred. The thing is; we have it on good authority—”

“We’?”

“Oh, yes. That swan over there. See him? across the field, just this side of that fence. That’s Gloria’s mate! He’s been marvelous about ferrying me all over to pass the word... Let’s go over that way. He’s absolutely safe.”

So Swen Swan was able to attend and be kept a jour during the latter part of the insects’ conference. After greetings and (re)introductions (Bettina B. *thought* she remembered seeing Swen during the days she’d passed over and around Lake Quad), the ladybird continued.

“We’ve just come here from the castle of a tin emperor where we learned that that death squad I originally heard about is on its way back to the Emerald City. We *think* they haven’t been able to murder anybody yet—”

“We passed them!” exclaimed the butterfly. “At least, we sighted a walking party about an hour ago: five or six creatures? including a boy. So naturally we gave them a wide berth. Actually, it was rather funny—”

“What was?”

“Oh, one of the strollers was the strangest-looking thing: a myriad of every color imaginable, all stuck together somehow. A lot of us were greatly attracted. It was like a walking heap of flowers! But of course we didn’t go any nearer when we noticed it was walking hand in hand with a menacing *boy*...”

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Neither of the speakers realized at the time that Miss Bettina was talking about the now-to-become-celebrated Patchwork Girl of Oz.

“Curious,” opined the beetle. “I don’t suppose you were able to find out for sure if they’d got hold of that butterfly wing?”

“Well, they weren’t waving it around,” admitted Bettina. “And of course we weren’t going near enough to hear what they said *or* to collaborate in their death plot. We just headed on west again.”

“Okay,” summed up Lurabelle Ladybeetle. “No point now in carrying on with your mission. We’ll go back in a body, following that walking party. They’ll be heading for the royal palace. We’ll be there ahead of them! and put in our claim before the Girl Ruler—”

“What about me?” put in Swen Swan. “You need me any more, Lurabelle?”

“Oh, Swen! You’ve been grand! But no, I’ll go on from here with Bettina and the others. We want to be together when we present our petition before the throne but I hope to see you soon again at the lake. Give my love to Mrs. Gloria and the young ones.”

When the big swan had soared off in a flapping of wings the girl friends corraled their butterfly followers and got them headed back in the opposite direction. It wasn’t easy. Butterflies didn’t seem to have the innate ability, as do many bird species, to tune in on a ‘common mind’ and know, all of them, all together, what to do, where to go. Not like starlings could they rise in a single cloud at the same instant from perches in the top of a tree. Not like wild geese could they fly in perfect formation, negotiating turns without once losing their precise “V” flight pattern. The insects dodged and flopped this way and that. They were doing pretty well not to crash into each other! But at last they all got on the way, heading approximately toward the distant city.

More time was lost when Lurabelle sighted on the yellow road below a congregation of her own tribesinsects. She went

all a-flutter and excused herself to fly down to the beautiful big blood-colored splotch upon the blond bricks. "Hey!" she yelled. "What are you all doing here?"

One of the males essayed to be spokesbeetle. (The fellows took exception, by the way, to being called "*lady*" bugs and opted for the term "coccinell" —from the Latin appellation for the specimens.) Colin Coccinell said,

"We heard there was a big expedition under way: going to rescue a Holy Aile or something, and we turned out in force. We caught up with the main body, a bunch of lepidopts, but say, isn't that them up there—?" Coccinellidae mainly keep their eyes on the ground when not directly airborne and Colin C. had just now realized the presence of the butterfly band winging east above.

"Yes," confessed Lurabelle, "that's the task force, Bettina Butterfly commanding."

"That's the one!" growled Colin. "She and her henchinsects turned us away! Claimed they were too many already. She was obviously having command problems. Said they appreciated the thought but they were warning all other insects off."

"Well, I know what she had to face," defended Lurabelle. "You wouldn't believe the swarms of mosquitoes and flies that tried to get into the act during my tour of alertment duty just completed. There was one mob of locusts that were particularly bad. I had to head 'em all off by directing them toward the capital itself. There was no point in having them try to tag along after us, not that they could have kept up anyway. I told them to attack any boys they saw and give them a hard time..." Alas, the charming Miss Ladybird seemed now in a fair way to becoming a militant martinette.

She thanked Commander Colin for interest shown and flew off to rejoin the butterfly horde. Then on they all fluttered and flapped toward the Emerald City.

c h a p t e r t w e n t y - s e v e n

Hurrying, our other heroes and heroines were able to straggle, a bit breathless, into the courtyard of the celebrated Pink Palace just at the end of dinner time that day. When the benevolent Red Sorceress was brought word, she instantly gave orders for the leftovers to be given a quick hot-up and set forth at a long table in the refectory. There she joined the party when the worst of their pangs had been assuaged.

"Charmed!" she asserted when the various members of the expedition had presented each other. "Yes, indeed. As a matter of fact I recognize a number of you from references in the Great Book of Records." She identified one and another as having, some days before, taken a fleeting part in the Adventure of the Patchwork Girl, which was still going on.

"And how may I serve you now?" she finished by enquiring kindly.

Bungle the glass cat grabbed the word. "That's partly it, Your Gracious Grace," she declared. The cat was something of a snob and enjoyed looking at a King, or, in this case, a queen, as Glinda virtually was, and of course it was even more of a treat to actually speak to a queen (or near-one and then with all the honorifics permissible). "Your hoble Omniscience will of course be aware that we—that's this woozy here and myself—were kicked out of that adventure, so we set off on our own little expedition to bring relief to the sorely tried Dainty China Country." Bungle was here fabricating freely. "We've had one or two small successes." (She was referring no doubt to the finding of the purple china dog, the china child, and the china charwoman, and their restoral to vital life. "But the greatest task still lies ahead.")

Here the cat told the story of the contingent of china people who had set out on a quest so long before and come a cropper; the charwoman, with interruptions by the dog and child, had given full details.

"And now we learn," Bungle continued, "that the rest of the chinas came to *you*, Your Supreme Serenity, some years ago—in with a mixed lot of demagified oddments. Say, we implore you! What was their ultimate fate?"

"Dear me," said the sorceress with a finger under her chin. "I hardly know. Do you remember, O.Z.?"

Here the Good Witch turned to her pupil, the Wizard of Oz, whom she had summoned to her palace, ostensibly for one of his periodic study sessions with the great adept. "Do you remember seeing any such lumber amongst the stuff brought here for disposal following Princess Ozma's embargo on the use of magic?"

"China figures?" said O.Z. Diggs, cudgeling his memory. "The idea isn't quite unfamiliar. What did they represent, exactly?"

"They didn't 'represent' anything!" piped up the little porcelain charwoman who was standing on the dinner table comfortably propped against the mustard shaker. "They *were* a princess—"

"A china princess?!" echoed Eureka the kitten, startled.

"And a chieftain—"

"A chieftain?" marveled Toby the pug. "With a feather headdress and a loin cloth?"

"Exactly," confirmed the charwoman. "And a churchwarden—"

"In a little tight wig and a black coat?" asked Bungle. "I've seen something like—"

"Yes!" assured the little china woman in certain terms. "And a Chinaman—"

"A Chinaman!" The Woozy looked blank and seemed to be trying, like the Wizard, to cudgel his memory.

"And a clown—"

"A clown!" cried the wizard. "Eureka!" The kitten turned abruptly to fix him with a look. "No, I mean 'Eureka!' in general terms. I've found it! A clown; all covered with cracks and traces of glue?"

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"The very one!" cried the china charwoman. "Oh, speak, sir! That's Merry Andrew Joker, jester to the court of the Dainty China Princess. Where is he?!"

"Why, in Warehouse Seven," replied O.Z. Diggs without hesitation. "That's where your grace's servants," he addressed Glinda, "store broken or out-of-date furniture 'til it's decided whether to repair or refurbish articles, or to discard them."

"Indeed?" said the Sorceress, rising hastily from her place at the head of the table. "Then let us hasten to the warehouse—and hope that we may not come too late," she added piously.

Staff Sergeant Cinna Munn was on duty in the warehouse compound and took from the ring on her Sam Browne belt a stout iron key. "This way, if you please, Your Grace," she said, and stood aside for the red ruler to precede her to the door of the last red shed in the row.

Sergeant Munn held a lamp as the sorceress looked anxiously along the shelves. Then— "Ah!" said Glinda, thrusting in her crimson-sleeved arm to draw forth a dusty figurine from the back of a shadowy enclosure. She blew on the figure genteelly, releasing a tiny cloud of pink dust. "This must be the one. And I remember now: Dorothy didn't want it. It was too broken and patched, she said. Dorothy was always fastidious."

"Dorothy?" echoed everybody, bewildered.

"Yes, of course. It all comes back to me now. The Princess was on a state visit here—oh, years ago—and having a rummage through these old storehouses. When she came across those ceramic figures she demanded—oh, very politely, of course—to have the lot of them. I remember she said that now her Aunt Em lived in Oz there couldn't be any objection to her taking the dainty china princess and all the rest of the figurines—to display on her aunt's mantel-shelf."

"Mantel-shelf nothing," exclaimed the pink kitten. "Dorothy's got a whole room devoted to her pottery collection. No wonder we thought the description of the missing people sounded familiar. We've all—well, most of us—seen them there dozens of times."

c h a p t e r t w e n t y - e i g h t

“So that’s the end of our adventure,” said Toby, the life-sized pug, a little sadly. “It was all over so soon.”

“‘Over’ nothing,” dismissed the Glass Cat. “We’ve hardly begun. We still have to release the chinas from captivity, and if I’m right in my assessment of that Kansas ‘princess’ that’s not going to be any snap. Furthermore, we haven’t even begun to mend your toe. And finally, what about Ojo’s quest? We’ve got to get back and send word to him he can skip it. We’ve already accomplished his mission for him.”

It was the next morning. Following the denouement in the warehouse Glinda had decreed that the next thing on the agenda was for all her guests to get a comfortable night’s sleep to make up for the one they had missed. This of course didn’t apply to such creatures as a glass cat and a couple of china dogs with a matching clown, child, and charwoman. Consequently these all passed the night on a cozy rag-wool rug in front of a faintly glowing hearth fire.

Their conversation roused them all to new impatience and they could hardly wait for the red witch and her friends to finish their breakfast. “Can we leave right away?” asked Toby from his place on Rod Litenin’s lap.

“Well, I don’t know,” stalled Rod. “Your Grace,” he said to Sorceress Glinda, on whose left he sat, “the animals are keen to be off, and of course we others too would like to be back in the Emerald City in time for the boy Ojo’s return. I think you said—”

Glinda anticipated him. “Yes, I was up early and did a thorough perusal of new entries in the Book. Ojo will in all likelihood reach Queen Ozma’s court about lunch-time today. There’s no great rush. You’ll ride in a couple of the swan chariots. The flight takes only an hour and a half. There *are* one or two details to be taken care of before you can depart. Perhaps we would do well to be about them.” She pushed back her chair. “Will you come with me, all of you, to the workshop?”

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The little Wizard of Oz was seen to be rubbing his hands with every evidence of glee and it was he who hurried ahead to throw open the rosewood door to the big north-lit studio rooms. The prince of Wates, Lady Stella Barr-Tau, Rod Litenin, the woozy, the glass cat, the pink kitten, and five assorted china figurines entered in some anticipation.

The first that there did greet their hardly stranger eyes was old Nunculus P. Gennet who, dressed in a new blue near-uniform of nearly military smartness (confected by ex-General Jinjur in her guise of womanly housekeeper), rose from a window chair and advanced to meet them. He was followed a moment or two later by a buxom woman whom all there but the Barr-Tau recognized as Dame Margolotte Pipt. She had left the side of her bent and crooked little husband, who remained seated on a stool, apparently bored in grief.

"He's so depressed," she near-whispered. "It's been a terrible blow to him to have to destroy his potion kettles and recipe books. And why?!" went on Margolotte, speaking more fervently. "The doctor never did any harm with his spells and transformations."

Glinda the Good raised her shoulders in resignation. "I quite agree. I'm afraid in this instance I am only the tool of our beloved ruler, Princess Ozma. She's got this thing about getting rid of magic in the country. As a lifelong adept I can scarcely be expected to agree with her wholesale condemnation of the craft. But what would you? We are the Queen's abjects and must obey."

"Aha!" exclaimed the Wizard Diggs, seemingly still in high good humor. "We must *seem* to obey!" He ran to pull chairs together for the ladies, and then continued: "Now here's what we're going to do. Her graciousness, Sorceress Glinda, on Ozma's orders, sent for these erring—or erred-upon—Munchkins to get them ready for the showdown today at the Palace of Magic. I must admit—and I believe her grace will agree with me—that we were considerably startled to find that two of their number had already been freed from their unlucky transformation. That's all to the good, of course, but it does occasion a bit of extra stage-

managing, so it's good that we have an hour or two before we should be off.

"For the general good we're going to have to indulge in a little deception. After all, no one but our dear ruler really seems to want to render everyone bland and colorless. You, sir—" the Wizard addressed the wizard, "do you want to cease being crooked and bent?"

"By no means!" assured Dr. Pipt, raising a tearstained face. "I was born this way, and for all my bentness I'm more agile and spry than many a tall straight individual. Who wants to be just one more perfectly-shaped, non-magic-working, bland nonentity?"

"Right!" Wizard Diggs laughed merrily. "Now when we get to the Emerald City I'm going to have to work a sham transformation on you. I'll do some passes and—strictly temporarily, for the Queen's satisfaction—you'll appear tall and straight, sound in wind and limb. But in a day or so, when you're home again in the Blue Forest the spell will wear off and you'll be your old familiar self."

"Thanks," said Pipt, but solemnly. "That'll be one consolation anyway."

"Same with you, Miss Cat." The Wizard turned to Bungle. "If you're agreeable, we'll do a pretend change on you right now. Ozma and Dorothy have taken exception to your pride in your pink brains, so for their sakes—again, only temporarily^s—and with your concurrence—I'll turn them transparent. Okay? You'll still have all your smarts; we just won't be able to see them—for a while."

The Glass Cat somewhat superciliously gave herself up as a martyr for the general good.

"And finally," pursued Wizard Diggs, "the trickiest bit of all." He addressed the recently disemmarbled man and woman. "For the sake of the show Ozma wants to put on, you two have to appear as marble statues again. Our great and Good Sorceress has had costumes sewn for you that will resemble near enough

§ See *The Magic of Oz*. Editor's note.

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the grey white-veined marblish look of your clothes when under that spell. Just for the performance we'll paint your hands and faces, and then I'll hypnotize you so that you go, truly, as rigid as stone. You'll stay that way until you hear me utter the word 'pyrzqxl', at which you'll at once come out of your trance. Got that?

"Oh, it's going to be great fun! And all parties will be pleased. As for your magic, Doctor..." He turned to the grieving magician. "Don't be too blue—though I know that's not easy for a Munchkin. When the dust has settled, I'll get Ozma to authorize me to engage you as official Munchkin-country representative of Legal Adepts, Incorporated, founding mother: Glinda the Good Witch of the South."

c h a p t e r t w e n t y - n i n e

Dorothy told the girl Ruler how successful they had been in their quest until they came to the item of the yellow butterfly, which the Tin Woodman positively refused to sacrifice to the magic potion.

"He is quite right," said Ozma, who did not seem a bit surprised. "Had Ojo told me that one of the things he sought was the wing of a yellow butterfly I would have informed him, before he started out, that he could never secure it. Then you would have been saved the troubles and annoyances of your long journey."

"I didn't mind the journey at all," said Dorothy. "It was fun."

"As it has turned out," remarked Ojo, "I can never get the things the Crooked Magician sent me for; and so, unless I wait the six years for him to make the Powder of Life, Unc Nunkie cannot be saved."

Ozma smiled.

"Dr. Pipt will make no more Powder of Life, I promise you," said she. "I have sent for him and had him brought to this palace, where he now is, and his four kettles have been destroyed and his book of recipes burned up. I have also had brought here the marble statues of your uncle and of Margolotte, which are standing in the next room."

They were all greatly astonished at this announcement.

"Oh, let me see Unc Nunkie! Let me see him at once, please!" cried Ojo eagerly.

"Wait a moment," replied Ozma, "for I have something more to say. Nothing that happens in the Land of Oz escapes the notice of our wise Sorceress, Glinda the Good. She knew all about the magic-making of Dr. Pipt, and how he had brought the Glass Cat and the Patchwork Girl to life, and the accident to Unc Nunkie and Margolotte, and of Ojo's quest and his journey with Dorothy. Glinda also knew that Ojo would fail to find all the things he sought, so she sent for our Wizard and instructed him what to do. Something is going to happen in this palace,

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presently, and that 'something' will, I am sure, please you all. And now," continued the girl Ruler, rising from her chair, "you may follow me into the next room."

When Ojo entered the room he ran quickly to the statue of Unc Nunkie and kissed the marble face affectionately.

"I did my best, Unc," he said, with a sob, "but it was no use!"

Then he drew back and looked around the room, and the sight of the assembled company quite amazed him.

Aside from the marble statues of Unc Nunkie and Margolotte, the Glass Cat was there, curled up on a rug; and the Woozy was there, sitting on its square hind legs and looking on the scene with solemn interest; and there was the Shaggy Man, in a suit of shaggy pea-green satin, and at a table sat the little Wizard, looking quite important and as if he knew much more than he cared to tell.

Last of all, Dr. Pipt was there, and the Crooked Magician sat humped up in a chair, seeming very dejected but keeping his eyes fixed on the lifeless form of his wife Margolotte, whom he fondly loved but whom he now feared was lost to him forever.

Ozma took a chair which Jellia Jamb wheeled forward for the Ruler, and back of her stood the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and Dorothy, as well as the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger. The Wizard now arose and made a low bow to Ozma and another less deferent bow to the assembled company.

"Ladies and gentlemen and beasts," he said, "I beg to announce that our Gracious Ruler has permitted me to obey the commands of the great Sorceress, Glinda the Good, whose humble Assistant I am proud to be. We have discovered that the Crooked Magician has been indulging in his magical arts contrary to Law, and therefore, by Royal Edict, I hereby deprive him of all power to work magic in the future. He is no longer a crooked magician, but a simple Munchkin; he is no loner even crooked, but a man like other men."

As he pronounced these words the Wizard waved his hand toward Dr. Pipt and instantly every crooked limb straightened out and became perfect. The former magician, with a cry of joy,

sprang to his feet, looked at himself in wonder, and then fell back in his chair and watched the Wizard with fascinated interest.

"The Glass Cat, which Dr. Pipt lawlessly made," continued the Wizard, "is a pretty cat, but its pink brains made it so conceited that it was a disagreeable companion to everyone. So the other day I took away the pink brains and replaced them with transparent ones, and now the Glass Cat is so modest and well behaved that Ozma has decided to keep her in the palace as a pet."

"I thank you," said the cat, in a soft voice.

"The Woozy has proved himself a good Woozy and a faithful friend," the Wizard went on, "so we will send him to the Royal Menagerie, where he will have good care and plenty to eat all his life."

"Much obliged," said the Woozy. "That beats being fenced up in a lonely forest and starved."

"As for the Patchwork Girl," resumed the Wizard, "she is so remarkable in appearance, and so clever and good tempered, that our Gracious Ruler intends to preserve her carefully, as one of the curiosities of the curious Land of Oz. Scraps may live in the palace, or wherever she pleases, and be nobody's servant but her own."

"That's all right," said Scraps.

"We have all been interested in Ojo," the little Wizard continued, "because his love for his unfortunate uncle has led him bravely to face all sorts of dangers, in order that he might rescue him. The Munchkin boy has a loyal and generous heart and has done his best to restore Unc Nunkie to life. He has failed, but there are others more powerful than the Crooked Magician, and there are more ways than Dr. Pipt knew of to destroy the charm of the Liquid of Petrification. Glinda the Good has told me of one way, and you shall now learn how great is the knowledge and power of our peerless Sorceress."

As he said this the Wizard advanced to the statue of Margolotte and made a magic pass, at the same time muttering

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a magic word that none could hear distinctly. At once the woman moved, turned her head wonderingly this way and that to note all who stood before her, and seeing Dr. Pipt, ran forward and threw herself into her husband's outstretched arms.

Then the Wizard made the magic pass and spoke the magic word before the statue of Unc Nunkie. The old Munchkin immediately came to life and with a low bow to the Wizard said: "Thanks."

But now Ojo rushed up and threw his arms joyfully about his uncle, and the old man hugged his little nephew tenderly and stroked his hair and wiped away the boy's tears with a handkerchief, for Ojo was crying from pure happiness.

Ozma came forward to congratulate them. She offered them a house just outside the walls of the Emerald City. Then other friends came up to give them good wishes.

Suddenly the windows of the hall were shaded over. It was darkness at noon. Everyone looked around startled.

It was as if live curtains of yellow trembled and throbbed beyond the panes. Ozma herself climbed up on a chair and released a window fastening. A great cloud of yellow butterflies, together with a numerous contingent of pink, chartreuse, lavender, and navy blue ones, stormed into the room, crying in tiny belligerent voices: "Where are they?! Where are the murderers? We'll see justice done! No one shall touch a wing of our bodies!"

“Oh, ha ha!” squealed the Glass Cat, greatly tickled. No wonder; butterflies were fluttering all around her, touching her glass integument with nervous wing-tips.

“Oh, ho ho!” chuckled the Woozy, proud to observe that a little host of pink fritillaries had settled on his square shoulders, where they seemed to be quite at home.

“Oh, hee hee!” giggled Lurabelle Ladybug. “What an anticlimax! After all our work rounding up this crowd. I wonder what we ought to do with them now.”

The Wizard, O.Z. Diggs, wasn’t laughing outright, but he smiled privately to think how he—oh, terribly respectfully—had put one over on the Girl Ruler. The latter had now withdrawn from the scene of the *éclaircissement*. She returned to her state apartments together with her most intimate circle of supporters. These had lately incorporated as The Ozma Association of Devoutly Idolizing and Enthralled Subjects, president: Her Extreme Highness, the princess Dorothy. The Wizard was left to clean up, which consisted in shooing off all the individuals who had gathered, invited or not, to assist at the denouement of the Adventure of the Patchwork Girl.

The Pipts and the Gennets had already departed in a body to make the return journey to the Blue Forest. Though frightfully grateful to Queen Ozma for all she had done, or thought she had done, the quartet felt they needed to get away quickly and to a distance to lick their wounds. Wizard Diggs had had a few words with them before they were off.

“Don’t worry,” he said to the upright-walking Dr. Pipt. “You’ll soon regain the crookedness that you were so proud of. I’ll admit that, for myself, I wouldn’t care to be crooked. Just being a humbug was time-consuming enough and I was glad to leave off and become a real magician. As soon as Ozma has simmered down and had time to forget somewhat this little affair, I’ll try to get her signature to the warrant we spoke of. Then you can function as a part-time magic operative for

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your region of Munchkinland. I'm sure you'll be glad not to have to stir your pots throughout the next six years."

As for the heirs of the ancient royal house of the Munchkin realm, Diggs could well understand that they wouldn't care to live in suburbia as hangers-on of the girl ruler who had caused them so many heartaches.

"Oh, no," assured Mr. Gennet. "Released from the various spells that were holding me back, I'd like to lead a more normal active life. I'm even wondering if I couldn't do something to retrieve a little of the honor and glamor that used to attach to our house.[§] It would be good for the boy." Here he laid a protective arm on Ojo's shoulder.

The Wizard had followed to a side door and seen the group off. Then he returned to what indeed was always known afterwards as the Butterfly Room. He clapped his hands.

"There are a lot of loose ends, friends, to be cleared up. I'm wondering how we should set about them—"

But the said friends were way ahead of him and broke in: "Right! We're no nearer accomplishing *our* quest than we ever were," cried a child, charwoman, clown, and dog, "and we've been at it a lot longer than a mere week! Thirteen years, to be exact. When are we going to get *our* just desserts?"

"Yes," concurred two cats, "and what about Toby's toe?" That sounded unwontedly altruistic, but as it happened the cats, for the time being, had no personal axes to grind. That didn't mean, however, (given their natures) that they were prepared to let things drift.

Rod Litenin and the Lady Stella, being on cloud Nine, said nothing. The Woozy almost didn't say anything until, waking from a short reverie, he cried, "Oh, they're getting away!"

The Woozy had been made almost as blissful as by bees at the attentions of the pink butterflies. Now they, with butterfly minds, had forgotten why they had settled on the Woozy's body. In fact, it was because he had sat in some honey at breakfast and then, in the press of affairs, neglected to get it

§ See *Unc Nunkie of Oz* and also *Ojo of Oz*. Editor's notes.

wiped off before taking part in the denouement at the Palace of Magic. Now the lepidopts were wavering toward the open window and the always alluring outdoors. "I must follow them!" the Woozy said, realizing that whatever should be their fate must be his too. He ran toward an open door.

The door was open because Edward, Prince of Wates, having been virtually ignored by Queen Ozma in her preoccupation with her role as judge and jury and feeling, as a consequence, *de trop*, never a comfortable sensation for one of royal birth, had opened the door and was going to continue going home. He had made considerable progress toward that distant goal, only to lose much of the advantage by this—for him fairly pointless—retrogression to the Emerald City. Now he meant to make up for lost time.

"Oh, wait!" cried the Wizard. "We'll all return south together shortly. The swans are on the lawn. But we can't leave without saying our adieux!"

"No, nor without our compatriots," reminded the china people.

Everybody stopped in dismay. In the excitement of the various consummations and (pseudo)disenchantments that had taken place they had well-nigh forgotten the awful dilemma looming ahead. At least eleven items in the ceramics collection of Princess Dorothy were to be released from captivity and restored to their home. But how in the world were they to go about it?

The thought of bearding the young princess in the midst of the now on-going gathering of The Ozma Association and asking to deprive her of choice pieces from among her collection was frightening to everybody, even—or perhaps especially—the Wizard. He knew better than to cross the influential young lady from Kansas. But the only other immediately self-suggesting course: to creep into the Porcelain Room, sprinkle life-powder on the chinas, and let them make their own way to freedom, was equally daunting. Who but would regard such a high-handed act as burglary?

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They all sat down on the floor right there and gave themselves to pondering. Even the butterflies, vaguely sensing something crucial in the air, turned back. When they did that so did the Woozy, and when he did that so did the Prince of Wates, who anyway on second thoughts preferred to wait for the swan chariots.

After due reflection O.Z. Diggs proposed, "Let us put it to a vote."

"That's a good idea," piped Lurabelle Ladybeetle, though in a voice so tiny that nobody but a few green and blue butterflies heard her.

"That's a *splendid* idea," called Toby, the life-sized pug, who, in eight minutes of cogitation, hadn't been able to decide which of the two courses was the less unnerving.

With that all those remaining gave their assent. To the general surprise, however, the proud but intelligent glass cat immediately made herself spokesanimal for the view that they should present the case to the girl Queen of Oz for arbitration.

"But, Bungle," offered the Pink Kitten, "I thought you didn't have a very high opinion of either of those young ladies. Do you really think we'd get a decision in our favor?"

"Wait and see," said the older cat mysteriously. "Meanwhile, I move that we save time by voting unanimously to take the case to Her Majesty."

All the wavering ones at once gave way. For the benefit of the rest, Bungle went on to describe at length the degradation it would be, and the blot on their scutcheons, to break and enter—

"It wouldn't be breaking," reminded the Wizard. "There are no locked doors in the Palace."

"Well, entering anyway," pursued the cat, "and assisting in what would be the violation of the American girl's prized collection, even though we should be motivated by the self-determination of people."

She pled skilfully and at the end of ten minutes called for the show of hands.

The Glass Cat carried the day! Everybody, even including some of the butterflies who, confused, got into the act, put up his hand or whatever he had. Some were surprised that the very delegates from the Dainty China Country themselves voted in favor of the measure. But they may have been moved by the thought that if their compatriots were surreptitiously restored to life and left to make a getaway on their own they could not hope to advance very far before being pursued by the outraged princess and returned to bondage anyway.

"Excellent," declared the cat and was just about to add a well-worded peroration of gratification at the outcome, when suddenly the room was full of butterflies again, driven back in wild confusion from all outdoors.

"What—!" yelled various voices but that was as far as they got when a plague of locusts burst through the open window and settled with a roar of wings on everything in the room. Thick and fast they came at last and more and more and more, while the horrified former tenants of the apartment fled in panic: into the interior of the Palace of Magic: away from the dread scourge.

The two cats led the way, swift-footed, Bungle hissing to Eureka: "To the queen's chamber! She can settle this too!"

Along the hallway they raced, up the grand staircase, along another corridor, around the corner, twenty yards on, and straight through the (fortunately!) ajar-standing door of Ozma's private apartment.

The pink kitten made no bones about flashing across the room and scabbling her way up the pink satin folds of hanging window drapes and hiding in the flounces at the top. Bungle, with somewhat more aplomb, skidded to a stop in front of the Princess' comfortable little informal sitting-room throne.

"Ma'am! Quick! Your wand! There's a horde of locusts coming!" And with no further ceremony Bungle ducked under the throne.

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Ozma, momentarily startled, was soon mistress of the situation. She felt down beside the cushion of her chair and pulled forth a crystal staff (she never stayed at home without it). Seconds later whirring insects were invading her ear poppies and in a trice had reduced them to tatters. Twirling her wand in air yellow-brown with horrid seething life she (too) enunciated "Pyrzqxgl!", added some even more powerful witching words, and ended with a wish that every insect within the palace and its precincts should undergo instant paralysis.

With a whush and a clatter the floor of the boudoir was suddenly knee deep in motionless locusts. Unfortunately, in her haste the good princess had worded her wish unwisely and the butterflies and a certain little ladybeetle also lay here and there about the palace, stunned. It was the work of the entire palace staff later in the afternoon and far into the night to sift the drifts of grasshoppers and separate out all other more innocuous insects and bring them for deparalyzation. By then our larger heroes had left town.

Ozma plucked from her hair her ravished headdress and cast it aside. "Whew!" she breathed. "Whatever was that?"

Rod Litenin, adventurer, made his way forward, crushing, alas, in his passage hundreds of living locusts. Ozma delicately covered her ears to hold out the sickening sound and looked at him askance.

"That'll be my fault, ma'am," he confessed, bashed. While the members of The Ozma Association and our various heroes, large and small, shifted uneasily, not daring to take a step amid the waste of locusts, he retailed the whole shameful story, which boiled down to the fact that wherever he went calamities followed. "Plagues, holocausts, revolutions, you name it: wherever I go they happen. That's why I've been a wanderer. Not exactly to try to get away from them. I knew that was hopeless. But just to spread out the misery a bit. It hardly seemed fair to stay put and let all the disasters happen in one place."

"Hm, this news is grave indeed," opined Ozma. She signed

for the Cowardly Lion to brush away with his tail tuft a few hoppers that had got on her royal chair cushion and then resumed her seat. "I'm afraid I can't, in that case, ask you to reside here at the palace, as your standing as a very unusual personage might well suggest. In fact, to be perfectly fair—and I am as fair as I am powerful," she reminded all the company, "I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to live outside Oz rather than in it."

Rod Litenin looked solemn. Actually, he looked like he was about to cry... in other words, the way Lincoln looks it all his pictures. He'd heard about how just Ozma was but, hadn't in fact expected her to be as just as this. Or rather "just?" That wasn't really the word to describe how this princess behaved. It was more 'high-handed but with the general good in view.' He remembered the fate of the Kalidahs and was no longer surprised.

But the Girl Ruler was going on. "But of course you must live somewhere. It would not be just to destroy you simply to reduce the incidence of floods and earthquakes in Oz. We must think of a place... Ah, I have it. Not all the deserts surrounding this country are deadly. Indeed, my own transfiguration into my present form took place on one of the deserts, separated from the burning sands by only the thickness of a carpet. *There* might be a spot for you in which to reside. I could provide a little oasis; some trees, a spring, and of course provisions sent in. Shall we say that? Whirlwinds and droughts would hardly be noticed there, avalanches and blizzards scarcely to be expected, and floods, I should think, precluded."

Litenin hardly knew what to say. Then he heard a crushing of locusts behind him and felt a thin hand slipped into his. He turned to the woman at his side.

"A book of verses underneath the bough,
a loaf of bread, a jug of wine,
and thou beside me singing in the wilderness?
Ah, wilderness were paradise, Barr-Tau."

c h a p t e r t h i r t y - o n e

Everybody, except, curiously, the condemned man himself, was looking close to tears, perhaps the glass cat least so, for she was heard to murmur smugly, "How *just* can you get?" But one person was wailing at the top of his voice, though only briefly, for his jaws soon rusted shut and he could only sob in a strangled gurgle.

"The Tin Woodman?" said Eureka the kitten. "What's he crying so hard for? He hardly knows Rod—if at all."

But the mystery was soon solved. The Scarecrow, treading as lightly as anyone was capable of over the heaped insects, stepped to Nick Chopper's side, took from his head the oil-can he used as a hat, and oiled his friend's jaws.

"Oh, thank you, Scare'ks," the woodman murmured low, and started crying again.

"Pardon me, my friend, but why are you weeping?" said the Scarecrow as he continued to pump oil. "Even Mr. Litenin, the person most concerned, is bearing up."

"It's these poor locusts!" cried Nick amidst his sobs. "They've been stepped upon right and left! Oh, don't move, I pray you! Even your light weight, Scarecrow, can be maiming to the little creatures. And Mr. Rod must have crushed hundreds just walking up to our Ruler's chair. Oh, whatever will I do?! It's so tragic."

This was a different way of looking at the situation, but it gave the Girl Ruler an idea. "I had been wondering," she announced graciously, "how to deal with the problem. I think I see a way. I shall give orders at once for the palace staff to sweep up the insects—as gently as may be—and load them on wagons. About sixty vehicles should do, I fancy, based on the creatures' thickness on the ground in this room. Then we'll have the wagons hauled to your castle at Winkiezia, Your Imperiality," she addressed the Emperor of the Winkies, "and you can take care of the locusts there. Will that be all right?"

Nick Chopper suddenly stopped crying and looked grave. But certainly not he nor anyone could fault the fairness of his Queen's decision.

"Meanwhile," Ozma went on, "let's try to get through into the bedroom next door." She rose and led the way, employing a sort of sweeping-aside foot-shuffle. "Luckily the doors there were all closed, so we ought to be able to move freely within."

As it happened, the Princess had no throne in her bedroom (though there was one in the little room just off it), so she sat on the state bed and all the members of The Ozma Association plus visitors followed and grouped themselves respectfully about her. "That's better," said Her Highness. "And now, what was it you were coming to see me about? For I take it that your pursuit by the locusts determined only your speed, not your direction?"

"Wise Majesty!" the little Wizard could not help praising as he took charge. "Quite right. A matter of some slight gravity has arisen. We crave Your Highness' just judgment in the affair. I am afraid yet another—or others—are going to be grieved by your decision, whichever way it may go. But the issue must needs be settled." Here he looked round to catch the eye of Princess Dorothy, who looked back in some bewilderment.

"The matter is thus." Mr. Diggs related the history of the Dainty China Countrymen from the word Go, ending with an account of how, through no fault of their own, a dozen of the harmless ceramic people, immobilized by a dread un-spell, had ended up in Princess Dorothy's china cabinet.

For once, and only very momentarily, Queen Ozma bit her lip. She cast just one solemn glance at her best friend and then she said, "The case is clear. There can only be one decision. Of course the china people must be restored to life—and freedom."

She held out her hand toward Dorothy. "My dear, I'm so sorry—"

But Dorothy shrieked, "Oh, Ozma!", threw her arm across her eyes, and rushed, sobbing, from the room. (She ran into a drift of locusts but she didn't let that stop her.)

c h a p t e r t h i r t y - t w o

Edward, Prince of Wates, and Rod Litenin, stalwarts both, between them carried the dainty china people's luggage, a small trunk. The chinas were not with it but in it. The trunk had a thick rubber floor and lining and there were little leather rings attached inside to hold onto, so unless the figurines lurched against *each other* there was nothing to break themselves on during their journey. For the sake of the congenial company, Toby the pug, though so much larger, rode in there with them.

The Wizard of Oz led the way as the party from Quadlinga, stepping around heaps of grasshoppers, went down to a side door leading out of the Palace. It was with some surprise that the little old fellow opened and found young Princess Dorothy leaning with one foot up against the outside wall.

Hastily the princess dropped the foot and faced Mr. Diggs. "Wizard!" she said urgently with no preamble at all. "Let me go with you! I'm fed up. I want to get away!"

"But, my dear Princess!" exclaimed her friend, who knew her tendency to crash other people's adventures and did not want to encourage the habit. Then he saw the tear stains on her face and did not have the heart to refuse. "Yes, of course you can come. Yes, it will do you good to get away for a bit."

Dorothy at once brightened a little and said, "I asked the Scarecrow to come along too, but funny; he said no. He said he'd 'rest on his laurels a little'. Anyway I guess the others would think it was queer if two members of T.O.A.D.I.E.S. decamped at once. But I just couldn't go to another meeting—not for a while."

"Don't think about its dear. Glinda will be glad to see you. And perhaps—well, we'll see. Perhaps something new and fun for you will turn up."

The Wizard hardly thought it would be quite the thing for Dorothy to intrude on the gala homecoming of the chinas to Dainty China Country, nor was it likely that the young lady would be welcomed as a member of the wedding when Rod

and Lady Stella headed into exile. He'd see if he could wangle an invitation for the girl to join the Prince of Wates for sightseeing as the latter set his course for his native isle.

As the pair crossed the lawn the Wizard made occasion to deliver Dorothy into the company of the Woozy, whom she had taken a liking to upon their making acquaintance a week before. Himself, he had to warn Rod and the prince to see to it that the chinas' trunk got stowed in the *other* chariot than that which the American princess would travel in. No use putting painful reminders in people's way.

"You don't look any too cheerful either, Mr. Woozy," said Dorothy by way of making conversation. "What's the matter?"

"I've lost my pink butterflies," mourned the square blue animal. "They disappeared the time we all ran for our lives from the locusts. I hate leaving without them but the others said there isn't time to look for them under the piles of other insects. I do hope they'll be all right."

"I wouldn't worry if I were you," comforted Dorothy. "They can't die—in Oz—and some day you may meet them again. It's not as if anybody's said you *mustn't* be with them... when you love them..."

"Well, but of course I didn't want to *own* them—" And then the poor Woozy could have bitten off his tongue for his thoughtlessness. He blushed purple in the late afternoon light and tried to think of something to say to retrieve his gaffe but failed.

Dorothy rather abruptly parted from the Woozy and joined the humans boarding chariot number one. The Wizard had gone to the other swan vehicle to keep an eye on the trunk and all the animals went along with him. The Glass Cat, rallying quickly from her pretend transformation into a modest subdued creature, had several spiteful thins to say. "Can you beat it?" she exclaimed, staring across at the other chariot. "There's that girl again, horning in on another adventure. But anyway I see she's had the grace to leave that awful dog at home."

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“Hooray for Dorothy,” said the pink kitten mildly. “Now you’ve got to give her points for that, Bungle. She’s clever enough to see how popular *he’d* be, dumped down among us.”

“Now we mustn’t be catty,” reproved the Woozy and knew he’d blundered again. His friends were getting quite used to seeing him purple. This time, however, he did think of a thing to say to win back some terrain. “Er—um—how smart of you, Bungle, to be so sure how the case of the china people would turn out.”

Bungle, at least, condescended to be mollified.

“Why, sure,” she said. “It’s all I’ve heard proclaimed from the house-tops for a week or more—how *just* that princess is. There was only one *just* solution to that affair.”

The pink kitten joined in the era of forgiveness and good feeling. “Right, Bung. You were on the ball there. Now we can all leave smelling like roses, as we wouldn’t have if we’d liberated Dorothy’s toys without a by-your-leave.”

But the glass cat, unregenerate, had the last word: “Right, Reke—and gave that stuck-up Kansas girl one in the eye at the same time.”

c h a p t e r t h i r t y - t h r e e

Glinda the Good was glad to see her friends and acquaintances back again and listened with attention to various ones' accounts of triumphs and defects. She praised the fairness of all Ozma's decisions but had words of kindness for Princess Dorothy and Rod Litenin, chief sufferers by the Girl Ruler's equitableness.

"Have a holiday here," she invited, "before you go on, the one into exile, the other to—we would hope—a meeting of reconciliation."

"Oh, thank you, Glinda," (Dorothy took a particular delight in calling rulers by their first name, not by honorifics) "but I don't know that I'll never be reconciled. How could Ozma do that to me? Her best friend! It's not as if I were *hurting* the figurines. Why, I get Jellia to dust and polish them faithfully once a week."

The red ruler on her throne looked at the girl just a little quizzically. "That was indeed most considerate of you, my dear." I'm afraid the good witch was being just the least bit ironical but Dorothy, secure in the rightness of her stance, didn't notice a thing.

Rod Litenin for his part also gave thanks but declined Glinda's invitation. "I guess Lady Stella and I'll get along to the desert. She says she's rather looking forward to it. She thinks the heat and dryness will be good for her catarrh. All those years in that dank tower haven't been healthy."

"Perhaps you're wise," agreed Glinda. "You'll go on to the south directly then? Not—er, to the northeast first?" She didn't like, in Dorothy's hearing, to refer to the china country by name.

"Oh, our good friend, Edward of Wates, has decided he can spare the extra day to accompany our other friends that far," informed Rod. In fact, he was again being a bit disingenuous. He and the Prince had fixed up the little deception privately. They knew that the chinas were not keen to make their triumphal return home in the company of a young person who, though no

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doubt in all innocence, had kept so many of them in confinement for so many years. Yet the others of the larger party (well, most of them) could not find it in their hearts to abandon the girl who so declaratively had chosen to join them.

It was always possible, of course, that Princess Dorothy would insensitively insist on going along to the Dainty China Country, but they thought she might choose a more diplomatic course, and that is what she did. "Oh, fine," she said to Rod, "I'll join you and Stella... if I may!", never doubting for a moment that she would be accepted. And of course she was.

So the brief but pleasant house party broke up next morning early. Just in time actually. The little group of Rod Litenin and his escort of two titled ladies had no sooner got beyond the first ridge to the south, out of sight of the Pink Palace, than a typhoon swept down and carried them away.

"Hm," mused Rod as he was buffeted along a mile a minute. "First time there's been one of these for a while. Still, I'm glad it waited to happen until we'd got away from Sorceress Glinda's. I wouldn't like it to have done any damage there. Or Prince Edward and the collection of china!" Rod shivered in spite of himself. After that he stopped worrying and resolved to wait calmly—as calmly as one could while turning head over heels in a screaming wind—and see what the future would bring. He dreamed of Stella with the bright red hair.

The two ladies of his company were not able to take the terror so philosophically, having had no or little experience of such storms. Fortunately, perhaps, Lady Stella struck her head on something in the first instants of the descent of the great wind and, unconscious, suffered no fright or awareness of discomfort until, an hour later, the storm, losing force, dropped her on a sand dune. It was different for Dorothy. She knew well enough what was happening to her! But last time, at least, she had had the comfort of a house about her. She found it was greatly different to be tumbled end over end in direct contact with the wind and she could not help being concerned. Her only consolation was the thought that she had left Toto at home in

the Palace of Magic. Here he would be just one more thing to worry about. And suddenly the green palace in the Emerald City began to look pretty good to her as a place to be.

Eventually of course the typhoon blew itself out, as typhoons do. Dorothy and Rod were thrown violently into, respectively, a lake and the tops of a forest tree. Both were glad at that moment of the prevalence of deathlessness in Oz. The bruises they sustained were enough to be going on with. Dorothy swam and Rod climbed, though all the while the two of them would far rather have been taking it easy, nursing their wounds.

c h a p t e r t h i r t y - f o u r

“Durn!” said Princess Ozma, who rarely swore. She had just discovered that the Woozy, Eureka the kitten, the life-sized china pug, and the Glass Cat had made a getaway for the second time without having had a dressing-down for the first. The girl ruler was exhausted, having been up all night directing the efforts of the clean-up crew who were shoveling locusts into bins and boxes and loading them onto carts. (In the end there were only fifty-seven of the latter.) At last at dawn’s first light she had been able to stagger—but still gracefully—to bed. But she couldn’t sleep.

Perhaps her many decisions during the previous eventful day weighed heavily upon her. None of them seemed to have been popular, nor, consequently, made her any more popular. The Ojo boy and his uncle had turned down her friendly offer of a house in the suburbs and the chance to come often to court and see *her*. The crooked magician, Dr. Pipt, had naturally felt chastened and Ozma could not expect that she had made points with him or his wife. Dorothy had gone to her room in tears! Rod Litenin, that tall gaunt fellow, had obviously not been best pleased by his condemnation to exile but he had put a good face on it; nice man—but there you were! For the good of the realm he had had to be banished. And finally, to be free of the creature’s cynicism and haughtiness, Ozma had had to do violence to the Glass Cat’s very nature.

Was there *no* one who had been pleased by what she had done that day? The queen sat up in bed, frowned, and tried to think.

Of course! The Woozy, that amusing animal. She had promised him lots to eat. *He* must be feeling grateful and pleased. She would send for him. A little conversation with the appreciative—and rather charming—beast would soothe her spirits and allow her to sleep.

She pulled the bell cord. While Ozma waited she happened to think—actually she hadn’t seen the Woozy since the end of

the tribunal held right here in this very bedroom. Nor any of the other animals! But of course they would only have been in the way at the cleaning-up of the locust mess. "Unless they had taken to eating any!" The princess had read somewhere that locusts were edible, although the source didn't say by whom.

But there was Jellia Jamb's timid knock at the door and the little maid entered.

"Sorry to bother you, dear, at this hour but is the Woozy awake?" asked Ozma, ending with a yawn.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Will you send him to me?"

Jellia Jamb looked puzzled, even a little startled. "Er, how can I, Your Grace? He's gone."

"Gone'?!" Ozma sat bolt upright. "Gone where? You've just said he was awake—"

"Oh!" gasped the maid. "I thought you said 'away'! He is away—along with the rest of the menagerie. I saw them heading for the side entrance with that man who smelled so bad, and the others—oh, about four o'clock."

That was why Ozma said "Durn." But she didn't intend to lose any further dignity in front of the maid so she smothered her annoyance and instead said, "Oh, never mind. Bring me a sleeping draught." And with a degree of disgruntledness unusual in one so lovely and universally adored she swallowed the potion, said "Good night," and turned on her side.

The Queen slept. No one knocked on her chamber door. They knew how just she was. It was only *just* that she sleep long and deep after her labors of the day and night preceding. Hence it was going on noon when Ozma finally awoke.

Again she rang for Jellia and said, "Please send Princess Dorothy to me."

"The Princess?" said Jellia, perplexed. "Oh, gosh, she's left town."

Once more it was Queen Ozma's fate to sit bolt upright and let out a squaw... "'Left town'?! But how could she?! How could she have the heart—" Suddenly the Queen of Oz burst into tears.

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“Oh, how unkind! Not even to let me know.” She was forfeiting dignity with a vengeance now.

Jellia Jamb was close to tears herself. Toto had come to her hours before with the news that the door to his mistress’ bedroom was shut and he hadn’t been able to get in no matter how much he scratched, barked, and whined. Jellia went to have a look-see and sure enough, the princess’ bed hadn’t been slept in. The maid thought it odd that she hadn’t been informed but not ‘til this moment did she suspect nor had their beloved ruler. Enquiries had revealed that the Scarecrow and the Patchwork Girl had seen the popular Kansas girl entering a swan chariot but neither had they been aware that the departure was completely impromptu and unannounced.

When Ozma had soaked a large handkerchief to repletion she dried her eyes on the pillow-case and sent for the Scarecrow. Oh, yes, admitted the stuffed fellow, he had been aware that Dorothy was going off at short notice with her old pal, the wizard Diggs. She had even suggested that he himself go along. But that she had been so thoughtless as not to let her dear friend and sovereign know —!

However the wise straw man sensed that harping on the favorite’s faithlessness was not the way to rescue Ozma from her depression. Let her attention be called to business! With a matter to tackle that called on her resources of power and justice she would perhaps earliest come round and be cheerful again.

“I’m glad you sent for me, your highness,” he stated. “I had hoped to have an audience as soon as you had awakened. A question has come up that may again require the employment of your world-famous justice and power —”

“If you don’t mind, Scarecrow dear,” said the Ruler, “I’d just as soon you didn’t draw any further attention to my possession of those two commodities. What did you want to see me about?”

“It’s one of the least of your subjects. She requests the boon of a few words with Your Majesty. It’s a certain Miss Lurabelle Ladybeetle. It seems she, together with all other insects, suffered in the general paralysis you ordered laid on yesterday. She’s just

been discovered — on an aspidistra in the chamber they've begun calling the 'Butterfly Room'."

"Let her come to me," ordained the gracious queen, the least of whose subjects could claim her careful attention. So far no germs or viruses had asked for an audience but when they did Ozma was ready.

Miss Ladybeetle received the summons and flew into the royal bedroom with a nervous whirl of wings.

"Oh, Your Highness!" she gasped, genuflecting. "I'm so glad to be allowed to see you."

For ease of communication Ozma here desired the beetle to advance and perch on her fingertip. "What was it you wanted?" she enquired.

"First, actually, just the honor of an audience," confessed Lurabelle. Stella Stick-Insect would be pea-green with envy when she found out. "And then, secondly, to ask for information: in fact, in short, where *is* everybody?"

Ozma too was aware of the echoing silence in the palace. Her maid, the Scarecrow, and the Patchwork Girl were making what cheerful noise they could out in the corridor. But it wasn't enough.

"I'm afraid everyone with any physical strength," explained the ruler, "has gone off with the locust carts. To pull them to Winkiezia, you know. We haven't any horses in Oz — except the Sawhorse and old Jim, the cab-horse, who of course are duly taking part — so *people* have to do the job."

"Oh, I see," said Lurabelle. "Yes, the straw man told me about the locusts. What pests. I tried to warn them not to follow us but they would insist. They said they'd represent a physical deterrent just in case our diplomatic mission didn't pan out. But I was sure it would."

"'Diplomatic mission'?" said Ozma, confused. "What diplomatic mission was that?"

So Lurabelle Ladybug had to recount the whole story; how she had got wind of the threat to a yellow butterfly and had mobilized her friends to avert the catastrophe. In well-chosen

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words she related the tale of her swanborne flight to the west, brought greetings to the Princess Regnant of Oz from her devoted subject Lana Peethisaw, described the trials of thirst and fatigue she and her escort had endured, told of the enlisting of other insect tribes to spread the warning, spoke of the enthusiasm of, particularly, the locusts, who, it proved, had not been sufficiently dissuaded from launching an airborne assault on all humans who might be intent on wing-snatching—

“Let me get this straight!” begged the girl ruler. “*You* brought the locusts here? even though inadvertently. But I made sure that one Rod Litenin, a wanderer of no fixed address, was responsible. He confessed it himself! And listed any number of disasters that had dogged his trail lifelong; floods, earthquakes, avalanches, volcano eruptions, storms, epidemics, revolutions, pogroms, not to mention blizzards, cloudbursts, and outbreaks of popular madness—”

“I’m sorry, Your Majesty,” put in Lurabelle, “but Mr. Litenin can’t claim credit for the plague of locusts. That was all my doing and I regret it bitterly. I know what a trial they’ve been to you.”

“So much for my vaunted justice!” exclaimed Ozma and looked fiercely at her track record.

There was a pause while both sovereign and subject looked glum and wondered what they could do to right matters. “I’ll simply have to go after them,” decided Ozma at last. “Oh, but drat!” There she was, almost swearing again—“the Sawhorse—not to mention the Cowardly Lion, the Hungry Tiger, the Cabhorse, and everybody else who might have given me a ride—has gone off with the locust wagons!”

c h a p t e r t h i r t y - f i v e

One tool for advancing her purposes Queen Ozma did command. That was her Magic Picture.

Carrying Miss Ladybeetle with her, the princess rounded up the few attendants who remained hanging uneasily about her chamber door: the Scarecrow, the new favorite Scraps, Dorothy's dog Toto, and Jellia, the faithful maid-servant. They all proceeded to the Hall of the Picture. There Ozma desired to see what her truant friend Miss Gale was doing.

I'm afraid the view didn't help Queen Ozma's peace of mind. Where she confidently expected to see the American princess living it up at the court of the Red Ruler, Glinda (whither she of course knew the swan chariots had been returning) Ozma instead got an aghast sight of her friend limping along a red road, totally alone, her Alice blue trial-attending gown all bedraggled and covered with red mud, and on her face the most woebegone expression her chum had ever seen there.

"Aa-ee!" keened the queen in utter grief. Her best friend still so loved despite apparent betrayal—in such a plight and she, Ozma, able to do nothing for her. Desperately she grabbed at and waved her wand but that did no good. The wand's power was effective upon persons and things in its wielder's immediate to vicinity but there was no way to beam its influence to something at a far distance whose location was not even known.

There were magic implements and compounds in quantity available on shelves and in cupboards about the Palace of (nota bene) Magic, but they had for many years been the province of the Wizard, O.Z. Diggs, and fairy Ozma had practically forgotten how to use them, if she *ever* knew. Ozma's role had never been that of great enchanter. She kept her wand chiefly for polite little parlor charming. And the Wizard was away.

"Oh, quick, Picture!" implored the Princess, not even stopping to recite an incantation or short verse such as was generally used to heighten the ceremony of invocation of the powers of the painting. "Show me the Wizard of Oz!"

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Whew. Anyway that was a relief. There was seen Wizard Diggs sitting cozily beside the red sorceress Glinda at the latter's workbench in the atelier at the Pink Palace. They had some sketch-plans laid out before them and the witch appeared to be explaining to her apprentice the mysteries of the pentagram.

At once Ozma tuned in on Glinda on her two-way wrist radio. Or tried to. Impatiently she tapped the royal foot. Then with a frown she looked again at the magic picture. Rats! (Well, you couldn't really call that swearing) The Red Witch was clearly seen not to be wearing her matching wrist instrument! How tiresome.

Balked again, and puzzled by the unaccompanied leisurely look of the two in the workroom, the princess commanded the picture to show her—oh, the exile, Rod Litenin.

The red scene faded, though only in contours, not in color. The view was still rosy but now it was of yet another country road and there was another woebegone-looking wanderer. But whereas the lost Princess Dorothy's attire had been seen to be chiefly distinguished by dampness, dirt, and disorder, Rod Litenin's was dry but in tatters. What in the world had happened to these people? And where was Rod's firm friend and companion Lady Stella?

It was natural for the little queen to ask to see that persona as well. Her mystification grew. The Barr-Tau was sitting on a dune staring out to sand. She looked very desolate. It was clear from the view in the painting, which was of desert to the horizon's end, that the lady was not even in Oz. Ozma's desperation grew. This was simply awful.

She wished to see the Woozy, and here at last she hit the jackpot. There was the amiable animal, also footborne along a red road, but in his company two cats (one of glass), a dog (one of china), and a towering Prince who carried on his shoulder with ease a leather-bound trunk. Hallelujah! At least some of the girl ruler's acquaintances had not been struck by disaster. But there was no way of communicating with them and presently the princess let the scene fade.

'Now thinky, thinky!' Ozma said to herself. 'There must be *some* way to get help.' Some distance away, far down in the Palace gardens, not far from Lake Quad, Timothy Inchworm, ham-sending on his own two-way mind 'radio', picked up her thoughts.

"'Help'?" he thought, and continued to listen in as the Queen spoke (and, unlike common mortals, continued to think as she talked) to her worried courtiers.

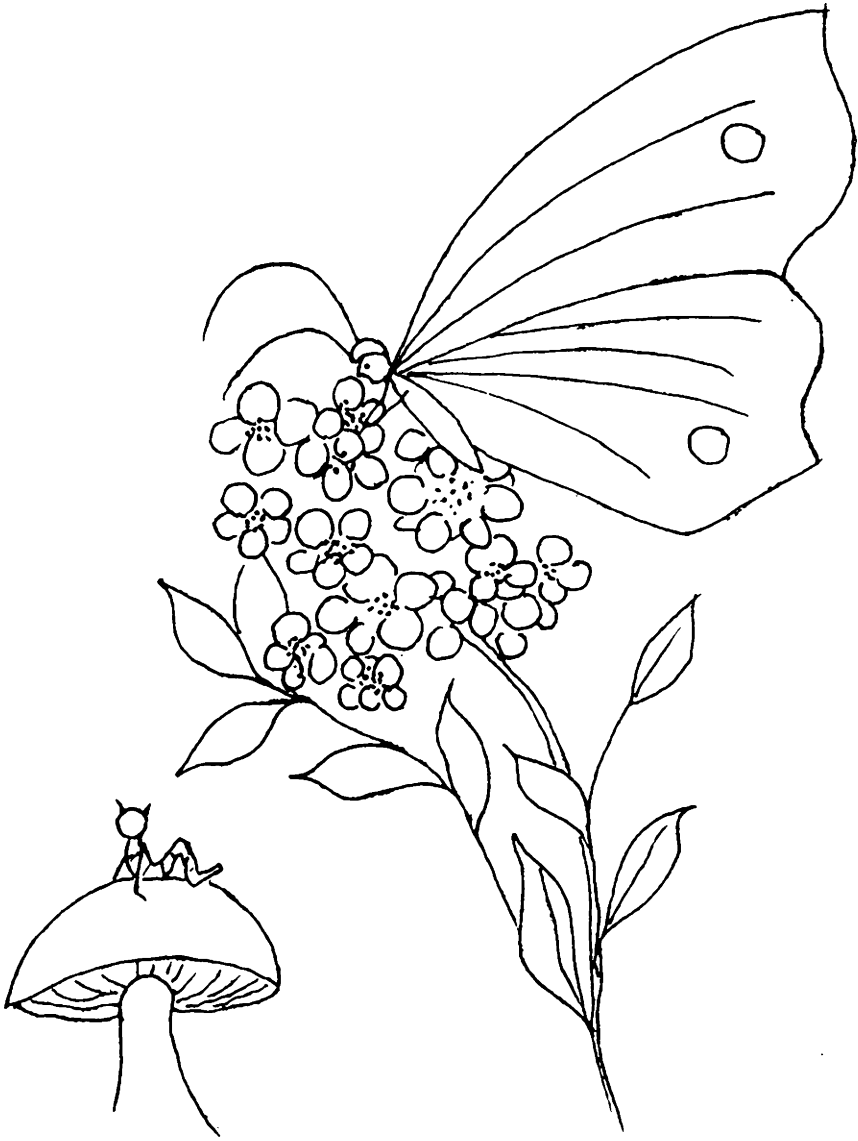
"Scarecrow, my friend," pleaded Ozma. "Put on your thinking cap. How can I get myself out of *this* fix? *And* all our poor suffering friends. Somehow we've got to get word to Sorceress Glinda—and assistance to the others."

Now Timothy could hear *two* people thinking and the thoughts came in loud and clear. Everybody's (and Timothy's) Queen needed a message sent! And who was better equipped to carry a message than all the inch-worm's winged friends in the garden?! He'd pass the word at once!

Oh, but heck. He could only go an inch at a time, and there was nobody within inches. Or wait! Yes, there was. That awful, lazy, all-devouring green caterpillar that nobody liked. What was her name? Clara! And Tim had noticed her not half an hour ago, stuffing herself two twigs away on the Snow Queen bush. Greedy thing! She'd burst one of these days, the way she guffed it in.

Timothy crawled to the edge of his leaf. Great Scott! she *was* bursting! The caterpillar's green carapace had split down the center of her back and there was seen emerging—were those wings? Was that an antenna? Goodness gracious, a great rose-colored butterfly was emerging to gorgeous life where had been before a morose unspeaking slimy green near-slug. The effect was electrifying.

And there! *There* was his messenger. "Hey!" squeaked the inchworm. "You there! Clara? Well, I don't know what your name is as a Rose Feather-Wing but never mind. Will you carry a message to—umm, oh, of course, the very one! Gloria Swan? Down on the lake! Just over there!" He waggled his head east by north. "Oh, I know you don't know her, but don't stand on



ceremony! You'll recognize her by the troop of cygnets trailing after her. Tell her it's an emergency. Can she fly to the palace of Witch Glinda the Good and say Princess Ozma wants to talk to her?"

"I will," spoke the pink butterfly and they mere worthy words to be the first she ever uttered. She took her first steps out of the discarded and now shriveling shell that had won her no friends and poised for a moment on the edge of the leaf as the inchworm cried, "Oh, hurry. Please!"

Meanwhile the pins and needles were sticking out of the Scarecrow's brain fit to bristle. This was as hard and fast as he'd ever thought in his life. The four females were thinking too (I don't know about Toto) but it was the ex-ruler of Oz in his own right who had the brilliant thought.

"Is not Your Highness able to transport, by finger magic, goods to the weight of eleven and a half pounds whithersoever you wish?"

"Why, yes," said Ozma. "I did that last—oh, I know; the time I sent the Yellow Hen to seek assistance from the Queen of the Fairies."^s

"And now?" pursued the scarecrow, waiting for the penny to drop.

"You, Scarecrow? But—" Ozma was being, slowish.

"Alas," the straw man cut her off, "I've been stuffing on heavier sort of hay recently—just for variety. I weigh thirteen pounds. But there is another..."

All eyes turned as one to the blushing Lurabelle Ladybird.

"Of course!" they all cried.

"Oh, Miss Ladybeetle," said the Queen of Oz. "Would you consider—"

"Of course!" declared Lurabelle in her turn. And Ozma went on about what she desired the amiable little insect to do.

^s See *A Fairy Queen in Oz*. Editor's note.

c h a p t e r t h i r t y - s i x

Rod Litenin was all at sixes and sevens. He might even have done some figure eights, so disoriented was he, but there was no ice at this season.

He'd clambered down out of the life-saving sycamore little the worse off, aside from his trashed toggery, from his time of blowing in the wind. But he was grieved and greatly worried at what might have been the fate of his dear Barr-Tau. What in the world ought he to do now? Where should he make for? Whom should he try to find in order to get help?

Well for a start it was a case of getting out of the woods. He blundered about among the trees trying to get his bearings. It was just as well that it was too soon yet for any further manifestation of his leit-motif of disasters and he thought he need not fear a forest fire for the time being. He was feeling half dead so he set his course by half-dead reckoning and in a little time, sure enough, he came on a faint woodsmen's path. Then, following that, he came out of the forest upon a road.

His thoughts had clarified enough by now for him to realize that the home of Glinda the Good was the only sensible p(a)lace to head for. But in what direction did it lie? He'd had the distinct impression that the typhoon had blown them southeast and so he planned to aim northwest. The road (unsurprisingly) offered a choice of two directions. He struck off left.

As usual the roads of Oz seemed quite deserted. Rod had plodded for an hour without encountering anything of note and then curiously the landscape began to seem somehow familiar. In another half hour he was certain: of course! He was not far at all from Rubber World! Or what had *been* Rubber World.

Rod recalled the sky-high flames that had started from his mart, the stinking smoke that had poured from his emporium. It had been too cruel. He'd seized a hat and run off into the night. He would not watch the foregone conclusion.

But now eight years had passed. Time healed all things so he didn't cling to his fear. After all, he recalled, spring hadn't been late

that year! He could bear to look again without anguish upon the scene of triumphs and an ultimate defeat. He'd go and see.

Yep, there was the familiar signpost at the crossroads. There, the gnarled oak that had served as gallows in the bad old time of wars and oppression. And there—but wait! There was a waste expanse where weeds had grown up knee high, but what miracle was this? Seventy yards beyond stood two long low buildings of a dark green-red that Litenin recognized as his stock depots B and C. A was gone but the rains of eight years had washed the remaining two structures free of even any traces of scorching.

With a wild surmise he ran towards stockroom B and flung aside the high slide door. No one ever locked doors in Oz except Dorothy Gale, once, and she didn't know where she was. The door worked perfectly. It wasn't even corroded or grown stiff through the ravages of many years' weather. So much for the damage done by the fire!

Within, in exemplary tidy array, stretched virtual acres of rubber goods waiting calmly, if in vain, to be dispensed to needing customers. Why, they weren't even very dusty, so securely did the snug-sitting doors keep out everything but people. And Quadlings never stole.

After just one gaping glance around Rod Litenin sat down on the doorway ledge and fell into thought.

He'd been too hasty by half. If he had never run off in despair he might have built up his business again and been quite happy. The fire had not been the total disaster he'd assumed. And think of the miseries of all those years on the road that he'd have been spared: the weary miles walked, the wakings in wet haystacks on rainy mornings, the loneliness. Ah, but without all those he'd never have found Stella Barr-Tau either. He knew it had been all right. Well, almost. Was his customary luck holding? Was his dear lady dead, or anyway destroyed? Would he ever see her again?

Meanwhile, there was one good deed he could do before he set out once more to follow—if he could find—the trail of the loved and lost one to the world's end.

c h a p t e r t h i r t y - s e v e n

Gloria Swan received with equanimity the message brought by the rose Featherwing (who, during her brief flight, had elected to use the name of “Felicia Featherwing”). “More courier duty?” said Madam Swan. “Oh, I think my husband is up to it.” She put out a black foot and poked the soundly sleeping cob beside her. “He was exhausted but he’s had a fine long sleep. It’s time he was awake.”

Swen grumbled but agreed to undertake the additional excursion down south to the Pink Palace. “The Princess wants the Good Sorceress to get in touch. That’s all?”

“Well,” inserted his mate, “you could give her the latest news.”

“Such as?”

“What Bettina Butterfly reported about the turmoil in the Palace of Magic. The invasion of the locusts and the temporary paralysis of *all* insect life. It sounded quite exciting. I’m sure the Good Witch would like to know.” Mrs. Gloria had no way of knowing that the Wizard, O.Z. Diggs, had already carried such tidings to Glinda—and with the assistance of (distant) cousins of Gloria’s own. “But wait, I’ve got a better idea. Bettina was around here just a little while ago. She shouldn’t be far off. See if you can catch sight of her, Swen, as you lake off. She could go along and tell her own story of her escape from the palace.”

The swans turned to give thanks to and take leave of the helpful Felicia Featherwing, who now remained rather at loose ends. Then Swen himself had a good idea. “Two butterfly passengers are no more trouble than one. Want to go along?” And the eager but inexperienced Felicia jumped at the chance to broaden her horizon.

But it was all in vain—or might have been.

When the wide-winged champion landed on the duck pond in the barnyard behind the pink palace of Witch Glinda and his

two butterfly companions wriggled out of his shoulder feathers and flew off to wait upon the enchantress, they found their news was stale.

"What?!" they whispered (which is about as loud as a butterfly can exclaim). "Not one but *two* parties have got here ahead of us? Who's in the second one?" For Bettina remembered very well from the dramatic scenes in the Butterfly Room at the royal palace the little Wizard of Oz who now stood attending on the red ruler at her chair of state.

"Princess Ozma sent me a little ambassador," replied Glinda with a smile. "She brought us right up to the minute on developments at the Emerald City and woke me up to proper attention to my radio!"

Here the witch briefly flashed her wrist under its loose lace frill.

"Who was it?" Bettina still demanded to know.

"Why, a redoubtable little lady-insect by the name of Lurabelle."

"Lurabelle Ladybug!" shrieked (well, tried to) Bettina Butterfly. "My great chum! Where is she?! I lost track of her the time we were all thrown under that fell spell at the Queen's Palace. I never ever got to say goodbye before refugeeing south. Where is she? I pray you, say!"

Glinda looked grave. "It was Miss Lurabelle who brought us word of a great disaster: one taking place just over the ridge a few miles from here, and I knew nothing about it! What with all the excitement I hadn't been devoting proper attention to the Book of Records either. But Queen Ozma had learned of some sort of cataclysm (a typhoon, I now discover) that had separated one party of travelers who had been my guests here just last night. I hurried to take a look at the great Book and found out, what Ozma had not been able to learn, *where* the poor survivors were—"

"And Lurabelle?" broke in the two rose-colored messengers, more interested in the whereabouts of one of their own genus and an acquaintance to boot.

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"I can do a little finger magic of my own," stated the red witch modestly. "Indeed, I can send up to *twelve* pounds. Lurabelle was eager to carry on being helpful and when I ascertained that Lady Stella, the Barr-Tau, seemed to be the typhoon victim who was in the sorriest plight—"

"I know a 'Stella'!" said Bettina. "Stella Stick-Insect. And that reminds me; Lurabelle—"

"Yes, the little messenger mentioned that she knew one Stella, just before she went to meet another. I sent her off—oh, twenty minutes ago, to take word to the stranded Lady that we'd be along to rescue her as soon as—well, we've got our act together. The Wizard here and I have been finalizing plans for rounding up all the various lost and strayed. It's a problem in logistics. There are just the two of us to drive swan chariots but there are four parties to be assisted."

"And those are?" put in young Felicia.

"The Barr-Tau, of course; her friend Rod Litenin; our own Princess Dorothy; and finally the party including the Dainty China Countrymen, who could probably use a little help. Thinking it over, I recalled that that bunch, though returning home in triumph after thirteen years in exile, were no further along toward being able to come with the problems that drove them from home in the first place. Now, Mr. Diggs, will you pick up Dorothy and Rod, or would you advise going first to Lady Stella and then on to Mr. Litenin? Or shall—"

"Your Rufidity," broke in Bettina Butterfly, using an archaic tern of address for exalted persons of a red color; it is not known whence she had it. "Can you make things small?"

"Small? " Glinda stopped in mid-proposal. "Why, yes within reason. What had you in mind?"

"Now we're here we'd like to be some use," said the lepidopt. "And we've got our own swan, with chariot built in. If you could put some powdered minifier in a pouch that could be slung round our swan's neck, Felicia and I could go rescue the er, Barr-Tau. And save you one trip, you see."

“Well thought upon!” exclaimed the Good sorceress, delighted. “Most resourceful of you, my dear,” she praised the (always) blushing butterfly. “So let it be! And where shall we four meet again?”

“In thunder, lightning, or in rain, I dare say,” opined the Wizard, “if Mr. Rod is also to be of the party.”

c h a p t e r t h i r t y - e i g h t

The red Ruler of the South officiated at the formal opening of the new wooden stairway that she had authorized—and also built, by magic means—to enable the citizens of the Dainty China Country to break out of their period of isolation. Not that the chinas themselves were going to be wanting to do all that much sallying forth into the outer world. Their one essay in that direction had been such a fiasco! But now that renewed attention had been directed to the porcelain principality, tourists were going to be wanting to see the charming country and naturally everything was going to have to be made easy for them.

Glinda herself was the first to ascend, in stately dignity, the gilded-banistered stair and after her followed, in order of rank, the Princess of the Dainty China Country herself, then the Barr-Tau, Lady Stella, with close behind her her consort-to-be Roderick Litenin, Gentleman. The former dictator of Oz, Oscar Zoroaster Diggs, climbed the ladder, and only then did Prince Edward of Wates, having seen that the stairs would bear the weight of full-grown humans and being himself the fullest-grown of all, attempt the ascent, with a life-sized china pug and a woozy under his two arms. After them scampered a pair of agile cats, while a troop of little pottery people clambered laboriously up the high risers. (In fact, Rod Litenin would return in a moment and expedite their efforts.) Overhead, scorning the use of a stairway, flew a swan, a ladybird, and two butterflies.

On the little platform at the top of the wall Glinda paused and surveyed the scene within. A crowd of china people, gathered at the foot of the interior stairway (exciting intrusion into their humdrum world), raised a cheer and the Sorceress smiled and waved graciously. But her reception was mild compared to the enthusiasm that was shown when the chinas' own Princess appeared to them on top of the wall. When a little later the Chieftain also took a bow there was further jubilation.

"I see," said the sorceress, looking round. As it happened,

Glinda had never paid a state (or even incognita) visit to this of her dominions before and hadn't properly visualized just how lamebrainedly the area had been planned. "That porcelain floor," she mused, viewing the white fundament. "All very well, no doubt, if the china figurines were going to stand still all their lives. But their 'lives' is just the point: they're living and naturally will move about. When they do they may fall and when they fall they will break—"

"Your Magicity," called Toby the (also) china pug and teeth-tugged at the hem of Glinda's gown. She looked down. "Our friend Mr. Litenin has a cure for that! Tell her, Rod."

The gaunt wanderer stepped forward on the little platform. There was a bit of a breeze and his odor wasn't *too* oppressive. He explained. "I have enough rubber sheeting to cover the entire area. That should help significantly to prevent breakage from most simple fallings down."

"Splendid," the witch commended. "Please keep me informed. At the appropriate time I'll send transport."

"Well, I thought we might commence laying it tomorrow. Her Highness, the Princess, approves the plan, and her word is law—though of course the local Country Council will want to discuss it."

"That seems in order," agreed the Sorceress. "Shall we descend?"

The china churchwarden now hurried to the fore and gave the visiting dignitary his hand (just briefly; the position was a bit awkward) to lead her in progress across the country to the site of Old South Church. China citizens flocked after, raising huzzahs in brittle voices and mingling freely with the fascinating newcomers, who took great pains to tread cautiously.

There rested the White Heap of the World, just as the churchwarden and the chieftain and the chaplain and the Chinaman and the Chandler and the chambermaid and the charwoman and the child and the Chihuahua had last seen it, thirteen years before. Or almost. The china mender and his assistant had not tarried in coming to see what they could do

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and their efforts were still to be seen lying about: small fragments of the church fitted together and glued quite expertly. But it was clear that they had given up in the face of the scope of the project. How were little figures four inches high, be they ever so skilful and devoted, going to raise again to restored completion a china steeple that ought to soar to a dizzying eight or nine feet? Even if they might have been able to erect china scaffolding, a thing that had never been called for before, it was by no means certain that their iron glue would hold to an erection requiring heavy-duty structural bonding.

Witch Glinda stood with chin in hand and contemplated. At last she spoke. "It's like a giant jigsaw puzzle, isn't it?"

A chorus of admiring murmurs rose around her.

"Isn't it!" cried the Wizard of Oz.

"It sure is," agreed Rod Litenin.

"What is a jigsaw puzzle?" whispered Lady Stella, who had been out of things so long.

The Prince of Wates at her other side told her.

"I'll bet we could put it together," guessed Toby the pug.

"Sure we could," agreed the Woozy, "even though I might not be much help with my square paws."

"We'd help you, Wooz," offered the pink kitten generously.

"We could even help—with the little tiny pieces," said the two pink butterflies, who had taken up positions one on each of the Woozy's ear-hole tufts.

But the glass catsaid superciliously, "Unlike a puzzle, this thing isn't going to hold together by itself. What are you going to use for stickum?"

That brought a silence, for they had all been told that the old-fashioned local glue had been tried and found wanting.

Then Lurabelle Ladybeetle spoke. She had been remembering furiously. "There is," she piped, landing on Witch Glinda's nose just to be sure she was effectively noticed *and* heard—"a land far away whose inhabitants would like nothing better than to die for the faith! Even if it is not their own. Their only fulfillment

comes from getting to serve as super-tough bonder and they're languishing with frustration at not having a chance to do so!"

The lady-bird's announcement met with great interest and there was a general outcry for more information. So then Lurabelle talked again of the Gumbugs, as she remembered them, sticky and grainy and full of paste, and of the spell that had altered them so that they might not die, when their only hope of salvation lay in death and tackiness—and of the strange ultimate dream of Glue Moon. "Do you think they will ever find it?" she asked.

"'Glue Moon'?" said Glinda. "What does that concept connote?"

"The gumbug I talked to said they didn't know water, had never seen rain, that only a few grains of dry paste might fall from the sky 'once in a glue moon', but that they longed for liquid as the only vent for facilitating their function of 'adhering.' Apparently their own native fluids like glue and mucilage don't, paradoxically enough, have the right effect. What they're obviously longing for is plain natural moisture, and if they had it, why, there would be your structural bonding for rehabilitating the church..."

"Your gumbugs," put in the wide-awake Wizard, "wouldn't lack for liquid here, my dear. As we flew in from the south I noticed bogs and marshes, full of ruddy holes, in direct proximity to the wall of this country."

"And a swan chariot awaits without," supplied Glinda. "I suppose nothing would be simpler than to send it off to the west and let it be filled with gumbugs, should they be willing to return here to end their days as fixative."

"It's what they would love most, I know," gushed Lurabelle.

"Then go we," said Glinda, "to determine who they shall be that straight shall post to the Gumbugs."

c h a p t e r t h i r t y - n i n e

"A swan chariot?" I hear my readers say. But you made sure that two such carriages departed from the Pink Palace to round up waifs and strays, or even three, if Swen Swan could be called a courtesy chariot in his own right. The latter stalwart at this very moment was sitting on a swamp pool outside the wall of china, eating his fill of swamp flora.

But chariot number two? It raided in for a landing on the front lawn of the Palace of Magic, Emerald City, Oz! The front door of the palace was flung open and Princess Ozma rushed out, even as sub-Princess Dorothy jumped from the air-car and ran across the lawn.

The two girls flung themselves into each other's arms and wept fit to break any on-looking heart. Unfortunately the only onlookers were the Scarecrow of Oz and the Patchwork Girl and they didn't have any hearts. They did feel embarrassed though and discreetly withdrew again indoors.

"Well, my dear," said Ozma at last when the two had, flopped down on the lawn, exhausted by their emotion. "We really flubbed it there, didn't we?"

"'Flubbed', dear Ozma?" Dorothy raised startled tear-filled eyes. "How do you mean?"

"Well, let's say *I* flubbed it," retreated the ruler. "I got too *just* for my own good. I'm very sorry. In the future I'm going to be a little more human, a lot less all-wise..." she paused. Dorothy said nothing. So Ozma turned the gravity of her remarks with a pleasantry. "And you must help me, dear," she went on. "It won't be easy being 'more human'! Because, as you know, I'm *not* human."

She waited for the laugh. It didn't come. Dorothy just kept on looking startled. "'Not human'?" she again echoed.

"No, of course not." Ozma adopted a no-nonsense tone. "We fairies, by definition, are not human. We're immortals: can't die; have no souls; and so forth. So I'm going to need help in trying to *appear* human."

"Don't trouble yourself, dear heart," said the Kansas girl, becoming more alert mentally. "Being 'human' is no recommendation. But for our vanity the word 'humanity' could be used as a synonym for 'cruelty.' Humans are the cruelest—in fact, the only true cruel—creatures in the world."

"Oh, Dorothy darling," Ozma cried in distress, "you've let yourself grow bitter!"

"No, only wiser." The mortal girl recounted. "Dragging along that deserted road I had time to think. I was mad at you for taking my china playthings. I thought about everything you'd done lately, and resented all of it! How you'd put Ojo in jail and humiliated him before all his friends and destroyed the poor old magician's magic and—"

"No more, dearest," pleaded Ozma. "Do you think I don't remember—and regret?"

"But it wasn't only you," Dorothy went on. "I came to see my own selfishness in a new light, and my smugness and priggishness and pride. Everyone has spent so many years telling me how simple and sweet and charming I am that I finally—that is, right away—began believing it myself. But what's the good of being called charming all the time if one is never seen to be doing anything charming? 'Matter-of-fact' is about as strong a word of praise as can be honestly applied to anything I've done so far. And the very first minute you did anything to cross me I burst into a flood of tears and ran off, just like any spoiled creature. I'm—well, very much ashamed."

"Don't say another word, darling. The moment that anyone uses the word 'ashamed' of herself it's no longer necessary! We've learned, both of us, and we won't make those mistakes again."

"But, Ozma," pursued the chastened mortal girl, "I *am* still ashamed. When kind Glinda showed up with her swan chariot I refused to go along with her to the dainty china country. I just couldn't face the Chinas—after what I'd done."

"But, dear," Ozma continue to protest, "when you came into possession of the figurines they appeared to be stiff lifeless porcelain. You couldn't know—"

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“Oh, yes, I could! Do you think I didn’t recognize the china Princess? I’d spoken to her! And the clown. But he was all cracked and re-mended, and I remembered how impudent he had been to me, so I left him to gather dust in Glinda’s storehouse. And several of the others. I knew they had once been alive, but had lost life, though I didn’t know how they had lost it, yet I went along with the implications of your edict against magic and profited by it, selfishly. I couldn’t go among them after that.”

“So Glinda went on alone.”

“Yes, we flew back to the redwood grove just outside the wall of china and I left her there. She let me take the chariot to come on here. Oh, Ozma, it’s such a relief to be back.”

“—And to have you back!” assured the girl ruler warmly. “But, Dorothy, do you think we can leave it at that?”

“What more can I do?”

“Don’t you think people will believe you’re sulking if you never go near the Chinas again?”

The sub-princess looked dismayed. “I guess they will.”

There was a silence.

“Where’s the chariot,” said Princess Ozma. “Shall we?”

Toby, assisted by his purple pal Purpupplio, was in his element, helping fellow china creatures in need. He had appointed himself virtual head of the Church Restoration Scheme, bossing the various aspects of the operation as the human helpers sat or knelt on the porcelain ground fitting together larger shards of the china puzzle while smaller creatures dealt with chips and fragments that required their more minute scrutiny to know where they belonged.

They were all hard at it and making very good headway as evening fell. Then one or two began to wonder about spending the night, as it was clear that the great puzzle could not be completed that day. Witch Glinda had just said to her chief associate, "Wizard, do you think you might do us sleeping pavilions for the night? Over to the east, I should imagine, in that high and dry redwood grove outside the walls." Then she looked round to see tripping toward them the young Queen of Oz, and in her company an unwontedly serious-looking Princess Dorothy.

Amidst the general exclamations of delight at the arrival of the popular young ladies no one said a word of reproach to the one from Kansas. Gradually Dorothy relaxed and began to enjoy herself and then she knew she had been right to come. Presently she even essayed to take part in the work of reconstruction and was the one to turn up a china fragment which formed part of a cornice and which everyone had been looking for.

But now it was too dark to go on and the company of repairpersons made their way carefully back to the wall staircase and found a suitable place to camp. The Wizard of Oz conjured up a substantial meal and one suited to the needs of the individual diners. Only then did most realize just how famished they were or call back to mind how incredibly long ago breakfast had been on this most eventful day in ages.

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At the principal table Princess Ozma naturally sat at the head. When the worst pangs had been assuaged she tapped her glass and said, "Today has seen the tarnishing of my highly vaunted reputation for justness. Perhaps some impersonal ideal of justice was served by some of my decisions, but nobody was made happy as a result. Unfortunately some of the suffering caused by my—let us admit it—highhandedness cannot be undone. But where it can be, let us try."

Here Ozma turned to the solemn Roderick Litenin.

"Mr. Rod, it was from motives of justness, or concern for the general good, that I sentenced you out of hand to exile. Had I not been so quick off the mark I might have thought to employ, instead of the highly touted justice, my equally celebrated 'power'. Nor do I mean only the power to promulgate and enforce a number of arbitrary laws.

"No, my power should extend to the accomplishment of deeds by the application of ability, intelligence—wisdom, if you will. Yet the moment that all my friends went off on one of my own-imposed errands I found myself to be almost powerless.

"My magic staff served only to influence things in my immediate vicinity. Without the help of my friend, the Wizard, I could bring off no wide-ranging wonders of sorcery. Without communication with the good Witch of the South I could not draw on *her* great knowledge. I wasn't even quick enough to recall, without the reminder of the wise Scarecrow, my facility with the transport of small objects. And even then our little helpmeet, Lurabelle Ladybeetle, was able to accomplish a lot more than could I.

"But I can learn, don't you see?"

"I would like to start with you, Rod. Far from going to a water-hole in the desert, you will, I hope, come to the Emerald City. There is a little house standing vacant, declined by a couple wounded in my campaign of righteousness. It shall be yours, *if* you would like it, and that, of course, of your dear companion Lady Stella. My wand will serve at least to make it weather- and earthquake-proof. Then you may come daily to the workrooms

of the Wizard and myself, while we leave no stone unturned as we try by every means to get at the source of your attraction for natural disasters. Perhaps at the same time we might succeed in building into your constitution a permanent fragrance of hyacinths—or of roasting coffee!—replacing any other ‘airs’ you may be heir to.

“All this, of course, only if you should wish it...?”

As an alternative to living the rest of his days in the desert the scheme didn’t look too bad to Rod Litenin. But he turned to the woman at his side for her decision.

“Oh, I could be content anywhere,” said Stella Barr-Tau in her thrilling dark voice, “—as long as we’re together. We can’t be parted, can we?”

c h a p t e r f o r t y - o n e

The return of the Prince of Wates in the swan chariot loaded with gumbugs was the signal for a great burst of activity in and about the dainty china country.

The prince had not reached the District of Cohesion until late in the evening and then only located it by the aid of the moon shining on the wide white paste Waste. He slept in the chariot while his pilot, Lurabelle Ladybird, flew out on a short exploratory trip and made contact with some of the native fauna. This was a night that went down in Gumbug history as a true "Glue Moon", for then something descended from the sky that was to change all their lives utterly.

When Lurabelle told them what was wanted and what a chance it was for any insect who had gum and would travel, there was enormous enthusiasm. The creatures could hardly wait for daylight to begin boarding the chariot but the ladybeetle warned them that the weary prince would scarcely welcome bugs in his bed (such as it was). Instead, they took time to pack their tiny suitcases more carefully.

By an hour after sun-up the air-car was overflowing with fixative life. Indeed, it is to be feared that many hundreds of the tiny insects were blown off by the wind of their passage as the chariot sped the long distance from western Winkieland to south-central Qualdinga. One wonders what may have been the fate of individual Gumbugs who discovered themselves descending, alone, into unfamiliar but presumably well-watered territory. Perhaps some found their way to others of their fellows and there started sticky little settlements. Or perhaps they merely ended up as a long trail of glue across Oz.

The look-out on the platform at the top of the wall stairway (it was M. A. Joker, clown) sang out the word when the swan chariot was sighted. It had been arranged that a large area at the center of the china floor should be cleared utterly and the chariot and pair made a perfect six-point landing. Then from the

periphery of the landing stage the excited on-lookers of both pottery and flesh (and even one of glass) surged forward.

Prince Edward took a bow and looked pleased with his exploit. (His reward was to be allowed the use of one of the chariots for his transportation to his island home later that afternoon.) Then china workmen began to fill china wheelbarrows with gumbugs. They trundled them to the side of the orderly arrangement of church-shards all key-numbered for instant fitting to matching bits. There the Wizard had caused china tubs of water from the outlying marshes to be set up.

The work went on all day and everyone took part. Gumbugs would crawl along a rim of broken china, someone would sprinkle them with water from a tub, then a further-fitting piece of the church would be gently lowered upon them, and with sighs of satisfaction the gumbugs would fulfil their destiny. By four o'clock that afternoon the assembled throng were ready with china wedges and levers to raise the lying-down (for greater ease of assembly) church into upright position. Then it was just a question of tall Rod Litenin and taller Edward of Wates climbing on stepladders to put the last pieces in place on top of the tower.

What a cheer went up when the Prince placed, like the cherry on the sundae or the star on the top of the Christmas tree, the little china pennon upon the tip of the steeple!

Then Queen Ozma shook hands with Wizard Diggs who gave his hand to the Good Sorceress of the South who saluted the Lady Stella of Barr-Tau who embraced Rod Litenin who spoke kindly to Princess Dorothy who clapped on the head the amiable Woozy of Oz who licked with his leathery tongue the china cheek of Toby, the life-sized pug, who playfully bit the tail of the pink kitten Eureka who turned to the Glass Cat who spoke to Swen of the Swans who inclined his head in homage to the now radiant Princess of the China Country who gave a little speech to the china chieftain and all their people, including the china Chihuahua who, aping his friend Toby, bit the leg of the china clown who hopped about and sent fluttering from off the

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Woozy's head the two pink butterflies who retreated to the side of their friend Lurabelle Ladybug who was sitting on a little white object, looking on and enjoying the fun.

"What's that you're sitting on, Lurabelle?" said Bettina Butterfly.

"Why, this?" said the ladybeetle, looking down. "I hardly know. A white stone, I think. I noticed afterwards that the Woozy had been sitting on it, covering it up, while the rest of the people worked."

"It's a piece of china, that's what it is," announced Bettina in no faltering terms.

"It's a piece of the *church*, *that's* what it is!" cried Lurabelle, scrambling off it in haste. "It got left out. How awful."

"Still," said Felicia Featherwing, looking up in awe at the towering church spire, "I suppose the church hardly needs it."

"Hm," said Bettina, fluttering near and looking over the fragment. "It looks like a toe, doesn't it?"

"A *toe!*" cried all the animals, who had been looking on in amusement. These were two cats and a woozy, two dogs and a swan.

"Yes. A toe," affirmed Bettina. "A sort of a toe. It's got a shape like a nail at the end of it, you see. Or more like a claw, really..."

Everybody fell silent and looked at Toby, the life-sized pug.

Then, as if it had all been ordained, oh, ages before, the dog limped to the little chip of china and placed his paw against it. A couple of left-over gumbugs saw their chance for immortality and leapt to insinuate themselves between china foot and china chip. Eureka the kitten gave a loving lick to the whole thing.

Tentatively Toby raised his paw and looked at it. Then he took a step. Two more. He ran. He raced around in a wide circle. And then he said, "Perfect! It works perfectly."

Everybody looking on cheered.

But then the pug sat down on his haunches. "It *works* perfectly. I can run without halting, for the first time ever. But it doesn't *feel* quite right. In fact it doesn't feel anything. The toe feels well, dead."

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“Of course it’s dead,” said the glass cat Bungle nonchalantly. “Gluing things to one’s body doesn’t automatically bring them to life You’re going to have to have special treatment if you want the toe to be living—and *part* of you.”

Toby looked distressed but the pink kitten demanded, “What kind of treatment?”

“A magic spell, I dare say,” opined the glass cat and licked her glass shoulder. “Now I know of one. I’ve seen it used. It brings objects of glass and stone and wood and cloth to life without fail. For it you’re going to need various ingredients: the wing of a yellow butterfly—”

“Oh-oh,” broke in the China Dog of Oz. “Here we go again.”



Lund, 17 August 1989 - 28 January 1990