

B E E N I E I N O Z

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THIS BOOK IS FOR
(who else!)
SABRINA DIANE LAUMER

WITH THE LOVE OF
TWO BROTHERS

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"I'm tired," said the Scarecrow. He laid aside his croquet mallet and sat down on the marble bench beside the wicket.

"You can't be!" Dorothy cried. "You're not like us flesh people. You're magic!" She came over to sit beside the straw man and sympathetically took his arm. "Maybe your straw just needs changing," she suggested hopefully.

The Scarecrow shook his head mournfully. Even his cheerfully painted expression seemed glum.

"No, it's more than that, Dorothy," he said sadly. "After all, I'm almost a hundred now. It's been that long since you rescued me from that farmer's field, you know."

"That's nothing," returned Dot jauntily. "If you're a hundred, what about me? I wasn't zero years old when first I found you."

"No," admitted her straw-stuffed friend. "But you're not straw either. Flesh—'meat', as you used to call it—lasts a lot longer—even a century if people are careful."

"Or longer, if they live in Oz." But Dorothy grew pensive, reminded of her mortality.

"Besides," continued the straw man, "you weren't all worn and faded while still being brand new, the way I was. That would make the difference."

"How do you mean?" said Dorothy, not quite catching on.

"Don't you remember that day?: now celebrated around the world wherever t. v. is known. Remember how I looked?"

"Yes, surely," confirmed the girl. "You looked friendly—although rather queer as well... In those days 'queer' simply meant odd or unusual," she reminded, just so her friend wouldn't have his feelings hurt.

"That's right," agreed the Scarecrow amiably. "In those days you could be gay too—without getting arrested. How the language changes."

"But what did you mean about how you looked?" pursued Dorothy.

"My suit even at the day of my birth was stated to be 'worn

and faded'—and my boots were 'old'. And since in my case clothes make the man, although I personally am only in my nineties, my substance is much older. My 'outer me' may be as old as 125. No wonder I'm starting to feel tired."

"But you always said—"

"Yes, that's right: that the farmer's old caftan I wore was good strong hessian, and that twenty or however many years it was—in wind and weather hadn't really ruined it much at all."

"That's the trouble!" exclaimed the Kansas girl, suddenly understanding. "That's what's the matter with you now! I bet. It isn't *you* that's tired. It's your 'hessian'—or denim, or twill, or whatever it is—that's worn out—"

The Scarecrow looked put out. "Well, not quite 'out'," he protested. "Whenever I get the least fray I go at once to Sewsan Smiggs's granddaughter in the palace attic and have her mend it with her grandma's wonderful invisible stitches. This outfit is as wear-worthy as it was a century ago."

"Okay, okay," backwatered Dot. "But I still think it's a case of material-fatigue. You know: like 'metal fatigue' in airplanes—or, maybe, more exactly, like the constituents in the famous one-hoss shay. They were so strong they—just like you—survived a hundred years and a day, and then they fell all to pieces at once."

"Hmm, maybe you're right at that," sadly agreed the straw man. "I feel like I'm about to go all to pieces." And here the worthy nonagenarian began to weep.

"Hey!" cried Dorothy in alarm, "don't go all to pieces on me! There's got to be something we can do. Yoo-hoo, oh, Ozma!" she yodeled.

The other girls were standing in a group down at the far end of the croquet pitch. Betsy Bobbin was trying to detach her mallet from a particularly sticky wicket. "What is it, Princess?" she puzzled for the fifth time. "I thought that bee-swarm we saw had paused here and this was just honey. But it seems more like iron glue."

§ See *The Gnome King of Oz* and *A Farewell to Oz* for more about this noble dame. Editor's note.

“It does seem quite magically tight-holding, doesn’t it?” Once more all three girls seized the mallet handle together and tried to pull it loose. It was at that moment that Dorothy’s call sounded.

“Never mind, Betsy,” consoled the young Oz ruler. “I’ll go get the Magic Belt in a minute and detach it that way... Yes, Dorothy!” she called:

Soon the Scarecrow had four young girls trying to console him but when he now discovered that he hadn’t even strength to get up off the marble bench his consolation was at an end, and he wept anew: dry tears, not even straw ones. He was veritably distraught.

The girls too were nearly in tears at the sight of their ancient friend so unmanned. But girls of course couldn’t do anything about ‘re-manning’ a man. This thought gave Ozma an idea.

“The Wizard!” she exclaimed. “He has technical know-how. He’ll know what to make of the case and how it may be treated — if it can,” she added dubiously. Ozma herself could in the twinkling of an eye have replaced any part of the (living) straw man, but in a situation like the present, with presumably *all* parts wanting replacement, how much would an all-parts-replaced image remain their original old comrade and not simply be somebody new they’d never met? No matter how magically capable she might be, Ozma was not, so far, an adept at transferring a *personality* from creature A to creature B. She wondered if it could be done.

It could not.

The group were in the rooms of O.Z. Diggs, Wizard-in-Extraordinary to the Royal Court of Oz, up 708 steps in the east wing tower of the Palace of Magic, and had just heard such a pronouncement from His Nibs' own lips.

"Why, no," said the Wizard. "For an entity to remain its true self (during whatever vicissitude of transformation or magic spell) some part of the veritable original substance must be present in the carry-over. But if, as we surmise, *every* part of our amiable old friend is due for imminent dissolution, what part could we choose? We wouldn't want the ninety-nine-per-cent like-new Scarecrow to have an eye, a hand... a brain! that was inherently feebler than all the rest of him—"

"No, definitely not," said Princess Dorothy with authority. "It wouldn't be the same!"

"No, it would be different," argued Betsy Bobbin logically. "Suppose Scarec's hands were too weak to pick up a croquet malle—!"

"Or his eye to gauge the distance to the next wicket," suggested Trot.

"Or his brain—to come to my assistance," posited Queen Ozma, "when some problem proved too knotty for me."

"That would be grievous indeed," concurred Wizard Diggs, "I think we can all agree.

"No, what we want is a strong and vigorous *true* Scarecrow of Oz to endow with wear-ever qualities so that this deplorable situation not again arrive for the next millenium or two—"

"Yes, I think that would be long enough," opined Ozma wisely.

"As it happens, the fruit of my latest experiments might come in here exquisitely opportunely—" said Diggs musingly.

"What experiments are those, good sir?" enquired the fairy Ruler, who marveled that she had not been kept abreast automatically of the progress of any investigation that sounded as

important as that.

The Wizard tittered. "Oh, it was nothing—to start with. But it seemed to get out of hand. Really it was nothing more than an attempt to produce a glue that would be truly ever-sticking: something that, applied to surfaces A and B to make them adhere, could never possibly be detached again—at least not without destroying either surface A or surface B."

"And...?" said Dorothy. "What happened?"

"Well, my product just wasn't strong enough. Not at first. I kept pouring in more and more of the fixative agents but always I was able, with strong solvents or, failing those, strong charms, to separate A and B again. No, what I wanted—rather as with God and the rock so heavy that even He couldn't move it—was an adhesive substance made by me so powerful that even by me the attached surfaces could never be separated. It began to seem a struggle between logical impossibilities..."

"Wizard," here interjected Betsy sternly, "you didn't by any chance try out your wonder-glue on the croquet wickets, did you?"

Diggs had the decency to blush. "Henh-henh," he snickered, caught out. "I confess! To test whether the adhesive's stick-to-it-iveness depended on the nature of the material it was applied to, I did go around putting dabs of it on this and that. Those wickets are an uncommon form of wrought copper. By the way, it worked quite well on them."

"I'll say," agreed Miss Bobbin disgruntledly.

"Hell, I'm not licked yet," pursued the savant nonchalantly, "though I'll admit that for the time being I can't seem to go any further in my search for the supreme fixative. Meanwhile I did turn up something else." The Wizard let a pregnant silence follow, which his auditors filled up with gurglings of excitement and curiosity.

"It was this," he replied to their promptings. "Just for laughs I later happened to sprinkle a soupçon of the Powder of Life in the glue pot. When it was well blended I sprayed a bit of it on a desk ornament and behold: it promptly came to lively life—never

more, I fear, to lose it, unless the object be utterly destroyed—”

“How fascinating,” breathed Princess Dot. “What ornament was that?”

“I expect you noticed it when you came in,” said the Wizard ruefully. “That stuffed baby alligator with the light bulb in its mouth that you see dodging about on the floor there? Perhaps you remember, Dorothy, that your aunt, Mrs. Emily, gave it to me on my last birthday. It had been doing duty nicely for illumination on my desk—but I’m afraid those days are over. I can’t get it to sit still any more.”

The girls all giggled as they took a heightened interest in the gimcrack that had already succeeded in tripping up one or two of them.

“But how does that help our present situation?” Queen Ozma returned the discussion to cases.

“It did seem a bit of a dead end to me, your grace,” answered the Wizard. “But when you mentioned your problem it suddenly struck me: what if one were to apply this, by now, really extremely powerful and tough and permanent—and withal life-giving—medium to the Scarecrow as he was originally in his days of youthful vigor? That would make a young strong Scarekewers young and strong *forever!*”

“A splendid thought,” approved the girl ruler. “Only, there isn’t any original Scarecrow any longer that is fresh and like now.”

“Ah, but there is,” contradicted Diggs. “The original portraits of our hero are just as much truly him as is the living man we see before us. *All* are the products of the fruitful minds and hands of the original Onlie Begettors—”

“You mean Messrs. Baum, Denslow, and no doubt Neill,” ventured Ozma.

“Just so—”

The Scarecrow’s brain was not so worn out but that he sensed which way the wind was blowing. “If,” he now inserted, “I am to look permanently like the likeness by Mr. Denslow or Mr. Neill, please let it be the latter,” he pleaded. “After all, I have

looked that way for three quarters of a century or more. Besides, I still remember acutely the awful wrench it made in my psyche when I had abruptly to change from resembling Mr. D's portraits to looking like those of the later artist. I wouldn't want that wrench in reverse now."

"A-ha," said the Wizard with satisfaction. "Our learned friend already grasps the thistle—I should say, the concept. As I envisage it we have but to bring to permanent ineradicable life a true—and still like brand-new—portrait of the young vigorous strawman and there we have a Scarecrow-for-the-ages."

Dorothy, though holding a university degree, still seemed a little backward in comprehending this concept. "But," she butted: "how is bringing a picture to life, be it ever so flattering and youthful a likeness, going to do our dear old original 'substantial' friend any good?"

"Some hokus-pokus must be applied, indubitably," admitted Diggs. "What has evolved in my mind in the half hour we have had the matter up for discussion is this: If we can bring to life a life-size full-figure picture of our friend, then cut it out of the canvas—with the most exquisite care—and attach it to our friend—"

"Burlap on burlap—more or less!" ejaculated Betsy Bobbin, suddenly catching on.

"Quite so," went on the Wizard. "—then seal the integument upon and around the substance of the living man, we will have the best of both worlds: the eternally youthful figure of the portrait enclosing the original physical matter of the Scarecrow as we have always known him. Voila: mission more than accomplished."

Nobody could come up with any logical flaws in the argument. So after batting the discussion ball back and forth a few more times, that is what they did... and Ozma helped. The picture they used was the handsome representation of the Scarecrow which is found between pages 174 and 176 in early editions of *The Scarecrow of Oz*.

The Royal Illustrator Mr. Neill had once sent a copy of the

original painting (part of a series depicting celebrities of the Court of Oz) as a mark of respect to Princess Ozma and it had hung for many a year in the Portrait Gallery next to the orangery in the Palace of Magic. Thither the crowd trooped.

It was Trot who had the idea of severing the figure of the straw man from the canvas while leaving plenty of the background fabric around. This was so that the whole three-dimensional body of the living Scarecrow could be covered with material (all of it now alive, of course) from the TWO-dimensional picture. That left the now 'eternalized' Scarecrow with a back (also of his head, arms, and legs) that was the neutral color of the background from the painting. That oddness would soon be rectified by the royal painter in residence, who simply applied to the straw man's back pigments matching those of his front.

The restored and now forever wear-proof Scarecrow danced a lively jig to celebrate, and all his friends stood round in a circle and were most gratified.

End of anecdote?

Not quite.



Up in the attic of a comfortable half-shabby old house in Flanders, New Jersey, three little girls were simultaneously playing with their sewing sets—and going through the contents of their grandmother’s old trunk. The attic possessed a distinct resemblance to the swaps table at an Oz-con. In a row under the sloping roof stood out-of-date Oz jelly glasses: nowadays people didn’t seem to go for painting on glass anymore: They just drank out of plastic—and had done with it. Against an end wall stood life-size pictures of such personages as the Frogman of Oz, His Highness King Scarecrow, and Woot the Wanderer. From the trunk tumbled battered old witch hats, Dorothy bags, pretend Magic Belts, and farmers’ garments and bits of armor plate—that looked suspiciously like fragments of the outer covering of certain too-well-known denizens of the magic land.

“What in the world was this old junk ever used for?” wondered grave Ginny—and was promptly answered by laughing Sabrina and Toni with golden hair:

“To dress up in, of course!”

“What is it, a costumer’s trunk?” still puzzled Ginny.

“No, for Hallowe’en... and costume parties. Around here, Dad says, when people had masquerading to do they copied the Oz characters a lot—because of Mr. Neill living right down the street.”

“Mmm,” concurred the oldest girl. “I know Neill gave those paintings to Grandma—” Here Ginny cocked her chin at the row of portraits at the end of the room. “He... admired her—and Grandad too, of course.”

“Yeah, the families used to visit back and forth,” blonde Toni could contribute.

By now little Beenie had incontinently yanked off her jeans and T-shirt and donned a heavy quilted dress that instantly converted her into a Patchwork Girl, suspender-button eyes and all. Only her adequate light brown hair didn’t resemble the original Oz maiden’s skimpy hank of yarn hair.

“Let’s talk about *me!*
I’m a Patchwork Girl now.

I’d dance a fandango

But I don’t know how,” rhymed Sabrina à la Scraps.

“Same ol’ Beenie,” sniffed Ginny: “always shucking her clothes at the least excuse.”

Sure enough, the youngest girl was again stripped to her skivvies and was in the act of putting on a denim jacket and a battered blue pointed hat, when startlingly a fourth voice said, “Good day.”

The girls all stopped in their tracks and Beenie forgot to button her fly.

“Did you speak?” asked the young girl in wonder, addressing the full-length picture of the Scarecrow of Oz, to which she, of the siblings, stood nearest.

“Certainly,” answered the Scarecrow. “How do you do?”

“I’m pretty well, thank you,” replied Sabrina politely. “How do you do?”

“I’m not feeling well,” said the Scarecrow with a smile. “I feel a bit flat.”

“But you *are* flat,” returned the girl reasonably. “You’re a picture: But how come you’re talking?” (Miracles were not daily in Flandera but Beenie was acting just like they were.)

“Search me,” said the pictured man. “It seems to have happened just this moment. I don’t remember being alive yesterday.”

“No, that’s right,” confirmed Toni. “At least, last week you weren’t. I was up here then, looking for an old gypsy headscarf with earrings on it.[§] None of the pictures were talking then.”

“I can’t account for it,” confirmed the picture of the Scarecrow. “Nevertheless it appears to be a fact. Already I’m not sure I like it: standing still all the time—or, if not still—” and here the painted figure executed a little jig in situ— “anyway unable to move off this canvas.”

§ See “Susie Pringle Among the Gypsies” in *Fountains, Fireworks and Balloons*. Ed. note.

"That would be—no fun," sympathized Toni, though at a loss for just the right word.

"Yes, you'd feel hampered—like claustrophobic," said Ginny the eldest, who had the largest vocabulary.

"Maybe we could help you," suggested little Beenie.

"If only you could," sighed the Scarecrow. "But how?"

Beenie reached for her sewing basket. "Here! What if we cut you out of the picture...? Then you could move around all you want." She grasped her scissors.

The idea was startling to everybody, but after a moment it also seemed the only solution. The children had no conception of the inviolability of works of art and the idea that you couldn't just-go-around-chopping up masterpieces, nor did the Scarecrow, trapped in his two dimensions, feel any connoisseur's compunction at the prospect of being freed from his medium.

"Cut loose!" he promptly cried.

Scarcely said than done. The wooden stretcher frame at the back of the life-size portrait proved a momentary stumbling block but the girls elected merely to ignore that and plunged their sharp scissor blades into the neutral off-white or grey background of the painting and cut toward the quivering outline of the famous man of—well, in this case, canvas.

"Hold still!" commanded Beenie. "We don't want to cut any bits of you off by accident."

All three of the young ladies were expert scissorers and now, working from three directions at once, they severed their ways precisely along the outer edges of the (thankably thick) black outlines within which Mr. Neill had delineated the Oz celebrity. In a very few minutes the Scarecrow was cut loose from his constraining background.

He took one step across the dusty deal floor of the attic—and fell on his face.

Oh, horrors. Nobody had thought of that! A sixteenth-of-an-inch-thick Scarecrow could by no means stand on his own two feet. Tender-hearted Toni burst into tears.

Beenie, not much more cheerful herself, looked to her elders

in consternation and for consolation. None was forthcoming. All they could do—and that didn't help much—was to turn the fallen canvas cut-out on its back.

With that the voice of the Scarecrow could speak and be understood again. "We goofed," he stated with chagrin. "How stupid. Of course a two-dimensional creature can't stand alone."

Only now did the quartet in the attic hit—too late—on the idea that the brilliant Trot, in Oz, had had at the appropriate time.

"Oh—, oh...!" mourned clever Ginny. "If only we'd cut you out with some of the background adhering! Then we could have wrapped you around something and sewn it up tight at the back and you'd have some—er, substance."

"Too late now," constated the Scarecrow.

"No, it's not," said Beenie, having a bizarre inspiration. "Sew him onto me! That way he'd have... somebody to stand up in."

The others all goggled, overcome with the preposterousness of the proposal. "But," objected Ginny, "—it's all impossible, of course—but *if* it could be done, you'd be two people in one. How would you ever cope with that?"

"I don't know," said the youngest girl. "Let's try it and find out. What about you, Scarecrow? Are you game?"

"What have I got to lose?" said the supine straw—I mean, canvas—man. "I haven't got much of a future lying on my back." He raised one knee languidly.

"You're best at sewing, Toni. Will you do it?" entreated the blonde girl's sister.

So they all watched Toni do it. Beenie lay down on the floor and they spread the cut-out Scarecrow over her and then the needle flew!

It was a fabulous moment when the new-created double person rose from the attic floor. There was the Munchkin-sized Beenie made over as the living presence of the Scarecrow of Oz. The Scarecrow costume she was wearing anyway completed the seamless illusion right round the back.

The man-girl danced a jig of delight right there on the spot.

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The Scarecrow knew how and the Beenie limbs were there to make it possible.

Greatly edified the three and a half people packed all the costumes back in the trunk, gathered up the sewing sets, and left the attic to go eat dinner. Equipped with a flesh body for the first time in his career, the Scarecrow was quite looking forward to it.

It was the custom in the Amerul household that the girls were allowed to ‘dress up’ when they liked. The whole family had theatrical leanings and found nothing reprehensible in pretending. The children were even permitted to come to the table that way. However, Mrs. Amerul did require that they take off their hats.

The Scarecrow of Oz was observed to have necklength light brown hair—but given the current fashions that fitted right in. Beenie went on talking in her normal voice and nobody seemed to find it odd that she brought her fork or spoon up to what was obviously a canvas mouth. The food went right on nourishing her/them:

But what to do when bath time came? That was easy: Beenie just took off the Scarecrow and draped him on a chair. The girl was celebrated for not caring who saw her in the altogether and as she said from the comfort of the big old steaming tub, “We’re going to be pretty close, Scarecrow. I guess you better know the worst—about how I look.”

“That’s all right, my dear,” assured the canvas-and-denim costume from the chair. “I’ve often done duty as night-time bedroom guardian for Princess Dorothy of Oz and over the years have glimpsed one thing and another.”

“Princess Dorothy!” sighed Beenie, applying the bar of soap under her armpit. “I’d love to meet her. What’s she like?”

The Scarecrow ignored the question and went for the wish. “Maybe you can. One day I’ll have to think about returning to Oz—and of course you’ll be along.”

Beenie stared. She hadn’t at all thought that far into the future. But having taken on being the canvas man’s alter ego she knew in her heart of hearts she was never going to be able to abandon him lightly to a dismal destiny of flatness and immobility. The unique masquerade would have one day to be resolved equitably—and where, probably, but in Oz?

The Scarecrow was Sabrina—and vice versa—all summer

long. What fun they had, doing as one all the things that little girls and scarecrows like to do. The family and household intimates got used to seeing, instead of three young girls, two young girls and a somewhat miniature figure that resembled a bird-scarer effigy. But when September rolled around Beenie had to present her other self with a dreary ultimatum. "I can't go to school wearing you," she announced mournfully. "It just isn't done. Not before Hallowe'en anyway and then only for a day—or two, at most."

The Scarecrow wept: tears of air. He still didn't have any straw stuffing to provide substance for lachrymation. They'd tried it once: somebody proposed that if they stuffed with straw the imitation Scarecrow costume with the live Scarecrow cut-out sewn to the front of it, they'd have pretty near an approximation of the old original vital straw-man as he was in Oz.

It didn't work. Try imagining that just the front quarter inch of you is alive and all the rest of you dead weight. You couldn't hold yourself up. Stroke victims know exactly how it feels. They get over-weight, fall down, and the viable portions of their anatomy are quite incapable of hoisting the whole person to its feet again. So it was for the 'portionally' alive Scarecrow of three dimensions. He had to have his Beenie to stand up in.

But now to crise.. Sabrina promised to run home every day after class and put on the Scarecrow. At least he'd be alive and kicking all evenings—and nights too. Beenie wore him instead of pyjamas and the happy Scarecrow experienced another first: how it felt to sleep. Lovely. Funny how some of the most enjoyable hours of our life are spent unconscious. The Scarecrow, as opposed to lifeless, which is quite a different situation, had never been unconscious before. It was a new—and better way to get through—the nights.

He got to eat breakfast too, that newly acquired facility and treat. But then it was time to 'deporre la giubba'. Neither the Scarecrow nor Beenie knew Leoncavallo. The girl's dad did and he could hum "Pesta la giubba" but he didn't really know what 'pagliacci' meant, yet here he was, sitting across from one at the

breakfast table. It was a 'figure made of or stuffed with straw' — and only by extension a clown.

The Scarecrow made it until the end of October, dull as it was lying draped over a bed or depending from a clothes hanger all day long. He could just about manage twiddling his fingers or toes on his own. (Were there toes inside those pseudo-Munchkin boots? I kind of doubt it.) But by October thirtieth he was ready to throw in the towel.

"This is no kind of life, Beenie my dear," he protested. "How is it to end? You're growing too, but I can't grow with you. Soon I'll only come up to your chin, and how will it look then when we go out together? It will seem like you've got two heads."

But Beenie was sanguine. "Oh, something'll turn up, I'm sure. This is all so magical: having you alive to talk to. Surely it can't end in tragedy."

"But we've got to make plans!" the Scarecrow insisted.

"I've made some," returned the girl. "Tomorrow I'm wearing you to school. It's Hallowe'en and we're allowed to come in our costumes. And then afterward there's a big parade in Morristown with all the school kids from miles around taking part—and everybody else that wants to dress up. It'll be marvelous fun. The folks are taking us. And maybe we'll win a prize!"

So the Scarecrow had to be content with looking only so far and no farther than tomorrow—as Beenie did.

Beenie was eleven and not tiny for her age. Therefore she could well fill out the costume of a Munchkin farmer that someone had once stitched together to approximate the semblance of the Scarecrow of Oz as W.W. Denslow portrayed him: at least a head taller than the circa-six-year-old Dorothy Gale.

Therefore it was not thought outré that Sabrina was allowed to march alone at evening in the big Hallowe'en parade at Morristown. Of course it didn't start out that way. Ginny was somewhere in the crowd as a cowgirl and Toni was a fairy queen in a fluffy creation of tulle she had run up herself—with a very convincing magic wand Dad had lathe-turned in his workshop and painted silver. But it was all so exciting and Beenie's attention was not at all concentrated on sticking close to her siblings.

No, what she concentrated on was being the Scarecrow. From the very first moment when she had lain down and had the living 'pattern' of the straw man sewn over her (with slits cut in the sides of the canvas head to hook over her ears and hold the face in place), she had felt (like Cathy with Heathcliff): 'I *am* the Scarecrow.' It was thus no effort at all now to walk as if stuffed with straw and talk in a rusty hayseed voice. Her nose was flattened away to nothing, pressed under the Scarecrow's canvas face, and one of her eyes appeared distinctly larger than the other. What's more, she could see better with its extra things.

For instance, now. She could see the people around her being impressed (in spite of their own masquerade) with the realism of hers. They spoke about her as "he"!

"Doesn't that scarecrow look *real*!"

"Yeah. Hard to believe it's just a kid dressed up."

"He reminds me of..."

"Ray Bolger?"

"No. Bolger and Haley never *really* looked like anything but men in funny outfits. But this one: you'd swear that's real straw sticking out of the seams."

"It is! Here. It came right out when I gave it a tweak."

“And the nose? Is that really just paint?”

“I’m *not* going to feel of it to see! Scarecrows have got feelings too.”

“I think you’re right. At least this one.”

Scarecrow-Beenie (or ‘Scarebee’) didn’t hear that. She/he (or ‘s/he’) was too busy concentrating on seeing. She took in so much with that extra eye size. It was as if she could see that little bit more of things she really wasn’t supposed to be likely to see. The crowd around her now: the kaleidoscope of varied colors: pirates, milk-maids, cavaliers, Turks, deep-sea divers. She could see what they wore but also how they wore it. That pierrette girl: her feet were killing her in the tiny ballet slippers on the hard macadam of West Dover Avenue but you would not know it merely from the electric smile on her face. And that couple there: she in the balloon trousers and he in the fez: they genuinely admired Scarebee and she could tell, though they seemed to be trying not to stare.

Or this boy beside her at the moment. What was he? Oh, a Chinaman—though those round deep-set eyes looked anything but oriental. The limp black glued-on moustache was all right though, and the pigtail attached under the pillbox cap. That pea-green sateen jacket was a sight: straight out of J.C. Penney’s junior-miss department, with loving-hands-at-home additions: somebody had embroidered the stand-up black collar. Somebody hoped he’d win the best-costume prize, no doubt. Oh, she could see now: he hoped it himself! He kept looking around to see if anybody noticed him. Beenie couldn’t see that anybody did.

Somehow she was touched—and right away she determined not to show it! It was clear to her at once: the face she inspected was one stretched lightly and non-committally over a vibrant swarm of emotions that must never be revealed. It was a face you wanted not to be there: it was not handsome and it was troublingly full of longing and would-be affection that would never be requited. If only it didn’t exist... to bother one. At the same time though, she could see it was a face that would go on

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for a long time.

Beenie didn't want to know—and yet somehow she did.

"Hi," she said, moving nearer. The 'China boy' looked at her. That expression could be a smile or a frown.

"Having fun?" Beenie pursued. "It's exciting, isn't it?"

"Yeah," said the kid, and shivered.

"You cold?"

"Oh, not exactly. But this jacket is thin, and it's October here. I'm not used to it being cold in October. If I could run I'd probably warm up."

This speech puzzled Beenie but she didn't let on. "We're *not* moving very fast, are we? But I guess they figure the fun lasts longer at this slow plod... You live around here?"

"No, the Palisades—for a while anyway. My family brought me over. This Morristown parade is supposed to be one of the sights to see."

The girl found this last expression also a little curious but she fastened on another angle of the boy's talk to reply to. "Yeah, my family too," and she went on to tell him about life in Flanders.

"You'll probably win," said the boy when she had finished. Beenie could see he had given up any pretension to winning himself—whatever it was.

"What's the prize exactly?" she asked. "Have you heard?"

"Don't you know anything?" the China boy blurted in rude kid fashion. "There's a lot of Prizes—well, two or three. But the Grand Prize is a trip to anywhere in the world."

"Wow. I know where I'd go!"

"Where's that?"

"Oz!"

To the Scarecrow-girl's astonishment the youth's response (again incomprehensible) was to burst into laughter.

"What's so funny?" demanded Beenie, now really miffed.

"I'm from Oz," said the boy.

When the crowding and noise and refreshments and announcements were over with, it appeared that Sabrina Amerul had been awarded the Morristown Annual Grand Prize for Most Realistic Hallowe'en Costume. The judges kept saying "he" as they declared the winner over the loudspeaker system. That's how convincing the little girl had ended up being, in the guise of a fully mature man of straw (or anyway canvas). The cheers of popular acclaim were deafening, even if all too soon over.

Beenie was surrounded by her congratulatory family. How thrilling: they all exclaimed. But what about the practical aspects of the prize? The award was a Morristown City Council voucher, good at any reputable travel bureau, for one first-class round-trip airline ticket to any destination in the world. Fabulous.

"But just *one* ticket," objected Mom. "They must not have expected a child to win. An unaccompanied child is not going to be allowed by a doting family to go off gallivanting around the world. Not alone..."

"Oh, I won't be alone," reassured Beenie eagerly. As the costume procession had budged slowly along the two miles of West Dover she'd had plenty of time to lay plans—just in case she *did* win—with her new friend from Oz.

"From Oz!?" Beenie had shrieked. "You gotta be kidding!"

"No, that's what we call it. Especially kids." But the China boy pronounced it 'Aw-z' (as in 'Aw, shucks') rather than, as purists would have it: 'Ah-z' (as in 'Ah, how wonderful').

"Tell me more: What's it like in Oz?!"

"Pretty neat. I miss it a lot. Good thing I'm going back for Christmas. I'm not used to cold weather and my folks don't want me to have a New York winter."

"Is it always warm in Oz?" asked Beenie. But that was a silly question. She knew from her reading that it was always the just-right temperature in the magic land. If ever it did snow it was only hot popcorn.

"Yeah. It can get coolish where I live but never downright cold."

"What's it called where you live?" asked the girl again. What if it should be Fuddlecumjig or Mount Munch?

"The town? Ivanhoe."

"Oh? Well, I guess that's Ozzy enough." Dad had read the girls the Scott romance. "I suppose everybody goes around in armor there—and tries to force newcomers to be knights and ladies...?"

"Hunh? No, not that I ever noticed. What ever gave you that idea?"

"That's the way they do in Oz. You must know that. But I suppose *some* towns could be more normal... What's your name?"

The boy gulped. "'Mose'," he admitted.

Beenie didn't bat an eye. 'Moses,' she figured. The boy didn't *look* Jewish—exactly. But Mose seemed used to this kind of embarrassment when his name came up. "It's Danish," he informed, not that that told Beenie much. "It's a family name. I guess it *is* kinda, funny."

'Not funny exactly,' thought Beenie. 'Unusual though.'

They went on talking as they marched: about Mose's Christmas travel plans and Beenie began to nourish a secret dream. If she won—just *if*—she'd choose to go to Oz! Maybe she and Mose could even travel there together.

So that was what she proposed now when the family left the judges' stand and headed off to the parking lot. Mose was trailing along. He too was to rejoin his family by the family car. He'd congratulated Beenie heartily, scarcely recalling that he had briefly hoped to win. When you were close you never won, no matter how honorably you tried. And when she said, "I won't be alone: I could go on the same plane with Mose!" he nodded conspiratorially.

Mom Denise dropped back to discuss the idea with the young 'Chinaman'. Sure, he said. He didn't mind Sabrina. It would be fun if she could go on the same flight. They'd be company for each other and could look out for each other. And he bet he

could even get his aunt and the housekeeper back in Ivanhoe to invite the little American girl to stay for a week. Beenie's family was not about to countenance a stay abroad of any longer than that. And after all it did seem a shame to pass up the unlikely marvel of the windfall win, though they didn't have the means for anyone else in the family to go along as chaperone.

There were high-level conferences on the upcoming jaunt, by phone and at get-togethers in both Flanders and Leonia. Time flew and then it was December fourteenth and both families were at Newark airport to see off the young voyagers. These two had got nicely acquainted by now, playing together while the parents discussed earnestly all dodgy aspects of the mooted jaunt. "Of course," Mrs. Maxton had said. "Sabrina will be more than welcome at Carn Avenue. I'll write my sister-in-law tonight."

Beenie eyed the big red Qantas plane sceptically. "I wonder why I feel so scared," she said but only to herself. Aloud she said, "KAHN-TAHS? That's hard to pronounce, without a U after the Q."

"Oh, we just sound it as if it were there anyway," dismissed Moss. "KWAHNT-us."

"I suppose it's a—what do you call it?: an anagram of Oz names—"

"Clever girl!" praised Mose.

"Q and A.would be from 'Quadling' - and N from *all* the four Oz country names. I suppose T could be from 'Emerald City'. But what about S...?"

"What are you on about?" demanded the boy from Oz, who however had never read an Oz book. "The letters stand for 'Queensland and Northern Territory Air Service'." He also didn't know the difference between an anagram and an acronym.

Beenie was mystified. "That doesn't sound very Ozzian!"

"It's *pure*—er, Ozzian. Australian, that is. Couldn't be more so."

"Australian?" puzzled the girl. "I thought you were from Oz?"

"Awz—Australia. Same thing—isn't it?"

“What’s with this ‘Oz?’” said Mose in the window seat near the front of the plane. They’d specified non-smoking: environmentalists and health nuts already at their young age: Mose’s girl companion seemed depressed and he was trying to distract her.

Sabrina attempted to smile but it was hard. She wasn’t going to Oz after all! How crushing. The Scarecrow for his part had retreated into full comatosity at the news. The indivisible companions just looked for the moment like a little girl in a rather odd masquerade costume. “Mmff,” said Beenie.

“Well, tell me about it,” insisted Moss as they flew over West Virginia.

“You really mean you never read an Oz book?” So far the girl ventured to speak, piqued in spite of her disappointment.

“No. What are they about?”

“There are forty of them,” revealed Beenie. “Actually, it’s more or less the same story all the time. But they’re—I don’t know why—somehow so fascinating. Dad says, with all the reading he’s done, no books ever captivated him like the Oz books.”

“Gosh,” admired Mose. “Well, tell me about ‘em.”

“Wel-l-l,” drawled Beenie, relenting. “I suppose I could tell you an Oz story. Dad made it up—one time for a bedtime tale for us a long time ago. And he’s retold it a couple times since. He always called it:

“A Generic Story of Oz”

“‘Generic?’” wondered Mose. “What’s that?”

“Oh—sort of typical. Like ‘basic’ ... ‘no frills’ ... ‘average’.”

“Yeah? Okay. Go on.”

“GRRRAAAHHHHH!” screamed Vitreous the Evil One. “I’m going to conquer Oz!”

“Oh, please,” muttered Taffeta, wife to Vitreous and hence Queen of Tralinda. “That’s only been tried about a thousand times and it’s never worked. Now if you want my advice, I’d tell

you to—”

“*SILENCE!*” roared Vitreous, throwing his crown at his wife. “I’ve just achieved magic power. Nothing can stop me! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-hah!!!”

Meanwhile, in America, Timmy and Tammy were walking home from school past the munitions plant when suddenly it blew up. The vast explosion, instead of killing them, merely blew them to Oz. When they came to, they didn’t know where they were, but they started walking and soon they came to a city.

“Let’s go in and see what it’s like,” suggested Tammy, and Timmy was agreeable.

“Ah-ha!” yelled a guard as the two children presented themselves at the city gates.

“We’re going to imprison you,” said a second guard.

“And make you slaves,” said a third.

“Take them to the king!” said a fourth.

Soon Timmy and Tammy were on their way to the royal palace, walking under guard through the streets of a strange-looking city full of strange-looking people doing strange-looking things.

“Ah-ha!” cried the King when he saw the two children. “We’re going to imprison you.”

“And turn them into slaves,” suggested the king’s Prime Minister helpfully.

As it turned out, a lot of weird stuff happened which allowed the two children to escape. They resumed their walk and presently came to another strange-looking city, where—surprise!—they decided to go in and see if things were any better there.

“Ah-ha!” yelled a guard as the pair entered through the city gates. “We’re going to imprison you,” announced a second guard. “And make slaves of you,” added a third.

“Take them to the king!” commanded a fourth guard. Thereupon Timmy and Tammy were conveyed to the royal palace.

“Ah-ha!” cried the King at the sight of the two children.

“We’re going to imprison you,” said the king’s adviser, adding, “and make you slaves.”

By this time, of course the children realized that they were in the land of Oz.

Again weird things took place and the young travelers were able to escape from their dungeon. Before long they came to another strange-looking city.

“Let’s not go in this time,” proposed Timmy. “I’m getting kind of tired of being captured and made a slave.”

“But we have to,” said Tammy. “It says right here that it is customary for travelers to Oz to be captured and made slaves by the people of three strange-looking cities.”

“Hey, where did you pick up that copy of the *GOGTRAA*?” yelled Timmy.

Tammy confessed that she had found in the pallet-side table at their latest prison cell the *Gideon Oz Guide to Required Adventure Activities*. Sure enough, there it stated quite clearly that new arrivals in the Land of Oz—such as themselves—simply had to go into at least three strange-looking cities of strange-looking people engaged in strange-looking activities.

Well, Timmy and Tammy were sticklers for following rules, so presently they found themselves entering a *fourth* strange-looking city and being captured by the strange-looking inhabitants.

“Hey, this isn’t fair,” whined Tammy. “We were only supposed to be captured three times.”

“Maybe we’ll get extra credit,” muttered Timmy dryly. “What’s next on our standard adventure?”

According to the *GOGTRAA*, read Tammy, they were now supposed to discover and try to stop an attempt to take over Oz.

“Whaddya mean ‘*try* to stop it’? Aren’t we allowed to succeed?” protested Timmy. “Skip to the end and see if it tells.” But it appeared that the *GOGTRAA* would (magically) not allow itself to be opened at a page later than that corresponding to the adventurers’ current predicament.

Having duly escaped again, the dauntless duo walked on and in the course of their search for a would-be current conqueror of Oz they came across a cave full of interesting objects.

"Wow!" yelled Timmy. "A rug that grants wishes! Hey, a pebble that grants wishes! A chair that grants wishes. A wish-granting lamp!" Wishing tables, cups, rings, shoes, belts, hats, pens, and wands were scattered about in rich abundance. Eagerly Timmy began to cram everything he could into a huge bag. The bag granted wishes too.

"Hold it," said Tammy. "The *GOGTRAA* says to take only one," she read out, and waved the *Guide* in Timmy's face. Grumbling, the boy put back most of his loot.

"I'll keep the wishing pebble," he proposed. "It's small and I can carry it in my pocket."

The twins then left the cave and began asking the animals they met if they had any information as to where the intending conqueror of Oz was to be found. In the end they were successful in finding out about King Vitreous and before long they were standing before that tyrant in his throne room.

"Nice to have you in my power," whispered Vitreous suggestively. "Now that you're in my grasp, my conquest of Oz can be completed. Nothing can stop me!"

The two children stood frozen in fear. Then Tammy had an idea. "Use the wishing pebble, Timmy!" she gasped. "Use the pebble to stop him!"

"Oh, yeah! That's right," answered Timmy and fumbled in his pocket for the magic stone. "It's right here!" But his words came too late.

Poof! A cloud of pink smoke appeared in the throne room and two little girls walked out of it.

"Why, it's Ozma and Dorothy," said Tammy, recognizing them from the pictures in the siblings' collection of Oz books. The two princesses had of course been watching the entire adventure in the Magic Picture and they now stepped in at the crucial moment to save the day. With a whispered command to the Magic Belt Princess Ozma solved all problems in an instant.

BEENIE IN OZ

After that the united group trooped off to a big party at the Emerald City, where Timmy and Tammy related their adventures to all who would listen. And let me tell you, Dorothy and Ozma were just amazed at all the strange and wonderful things that had happened even though they had already seen it all in the Picture. The wishing pebble was put in the emerald safe next to the wishing pills, wishing powders, wishing jewels, wishing... (well, you get the idea).

Meanwhile, Timmy and Tammy were socializing with all the famous Oz characters.

“Glad you could come here,” said the Scarecrow.

“Nice to meet you,” said the Tin Woodman.

“I was afraid for a while when I heard about your imprisonments,” said the Cowardly Lion.

“Glad everything’s all right now,” said Jack Pumpkinhead.

“Blah blah blah,” said Betsy Bobbin.

“Blah blah blah,” said Trot.

“Blah blah blah,” said Cap’n Bill, said Scraps the Patchwork Girl, said Ojo the Lucky, said the Shaggy Man, said Billina the Yellow-Hen, said the Hungry Tiger, said the Woozy, said Hank the Mule, said the Sawhorse, said Button Bright...

At last, when everyone—including the Lavender Bear—had said something, Timmy and Tammy were wished home by means of their own magic pebble, and everything went back to being just as it had been before, no matter how unsatisfactory that might have been.

The kids weren't lucky. Or rather they were: at least luckier than the person on their left and two of those in the seats immediately behind—for when the cabin pressure failed on that famous flight and blew out the imperfectly sealed forward right door, ejecting with the latter the five passengers seated nearest, the children were not killed outright.

Could the magicality of the brought-to-life Scarecrow have had anything to do with it? Our sources are silent on that issue, but the fact remains that when little Beenie mercifully lost consciousness in the first instants of the realization of the horror of her situation the personality of the learned straw/canvas man took over. A fall from *any* height could be no threat to him, nor was it here.

He concentrated his considerable acumen on the issue of how to help the other four falling erstwhile plane passengers. With extreme sadness he saw three of them plummet away from him and onward downward to a cruel fate. But Australian Mose was quite nearby in the air and the Scarecrow used Beenie's body strength to flap and flail and maneuver himself nearer to the falling yelling boy and succeeded in grabbing his arm.

"Hold onto me! Seize hold of me!" screamed the Scarecrow. "Wrap yourself around me as much as you can!"

Mose didn't need further urging and as skilfully as he could in the extraordinary circumstances he grappled himself to the body of the Scarecrow girl. Away they went on falling with just incredible verve.

While they fall, let us steal a glimpse at a lonely island far out in the Nonestic Ocean. There Malchor the Evil Wizard was plotting to capture slaves to do his bidding. His only problem was that he was all alone on his island and did not know any transportation magic. He would have to wait...

And Mose and Scarecrow-Beenie fell and fell. Beenie's brown hair streamed out with the force of the wind created by their own passage and the two children had never been in greater

danger.

As if that weren't enough, when they got lower they fell into the buffetings of a sea-surface storm which had appeared from nowhere. In fact it was a miracle of (continued) good luck. A wind is the one thing a hurtling body can encounter without being smashed on impact. The children's vertical fall was arrested by a violent horizontal wind current. They were blown and battered almost into renewed insensibility but when they finally struck the water it was not with the force to be expected in a plunge from eight thousand feet.

"Look out!" screamed Mose.

"I don't want to die," sobbed the revived Beenie in utmost terror.

Then they were nineteen feet under.

Fortunately both children were good swimmers, so merely being in water over their heads did not cause them to panic. They surfaced, found each other, and Mose seized Sabrina's hand in a gesture of comfort, but he said little. He was as terrified as she.

And still their luck was not out. A QANTAS seat cushion floated near them and they used every ounce of energy to battle through the waves to reach it.

An hour later a life jacket bobbed along not far away, and now they had each a thing to cling to.

All through a night the pair floated and moaned and suffered. In the early light of the false dawn, which the Arabs call "the wolf's tail", they saw that a large and very dark cloud bank had formed in front of them.

"The current is taking us right into that thing," growled Mose. "I don't believe in anthropomorphizing but I'd call that black thing out there threatening."

"I don't like it either but there's no way we can avoid it," returned Beenie in a shaking voice, the product of fear and sheer exhaustion.

In conformance with Mose's gloomy prediction, the current wafted the drenched children straight into the heart of the cloud

bank. Although one would expect a sensation of moisture inside a dark cloud near the surface of water, what our two adventurers felt was, instead, a tingling sensation all over, as if they were being drawn through a magnetic field. They saw a haze of green and then everything went black for them for several seconds.

When they came out of the cloud the kids were still lost at sea, but the situation was somehow subtly different. The water looked much bluer and the sun shone bright. Altogether matters appeared more cheerful than when they had entered the cloud bank.

“Oh, my gosh! A ship! Oh, please, let them see us!” bellowed Mose, and got a hefty swallow of salt water for his pains. He was not too pleased at that but in the main his mood was much improved when the old-fashioned-looking ship was seen to change course to head toward them and their pitiable bits of saving flotsam.

When the ship drew near, the children found it was piloted by none other than the famous Captain Salt. When Beenie saw (and recognized) him, she knew immediately that they were within the sphere of the Land of Oz and that this must be the Nonestic Ocean. How the Pacific had turned into it she couldn't explain. Now the only thought in the two castaways' heads was to get on board that ship.

“At least we won't need to take another bath for a week,” exclaimed Beenie brightly as the two were hoisted onto the deck.

“Are you trying to be funny?” grumbled Mose. But that was just nervous reaction to the terror and stress of the past twenty hours. There was no room for bad feelings as the pair virtually kissed the captain's hands. They were safe! and not only that but they appeared to be in (or at least near) the Land of Oz and Beenie figured that something nice might now begin!

Everything Mose had read concerning adventures on the high seas turned out to be, for the most part, false. Shipboard life was hard work. Since there were only three of them, the crew had to work constantly. Mose wondered how Captain Salt managed when he was the only one aboard. When the boy mentioned this Sam Salt burst into laughter.

"Princess Ozma and the Wizard of Oz gave me a full set of automatic equipment," he reported too late. "I can run the ship with no work at all: I just shut the machinery off because I thought you would want the full excitement of working at sea. How 'bout that, me hearty!"

Mose's face turned a beautiful shade of rose. It was evident that despite the efforts at goodfellowship on all sides he was still not master of his too sensitive emotions.

Still laughing, Captain Salt went below to turn on the automatic machines. Once this was done, Mose and Beenie had plenty of leisure for fun and games and other pursuits not usually mentioned in Oz books. They learned how to use a sextant and to do dead reckoning.

One fine day (the usual state of the weather in and near fairylands) Beenie sighted a small island with an unusual-looking city that stood near the shore. "How exciting!" she called from the bow. "We really ought to stop and see what it's like."

"I don't know," muttered Captain Salt doubtfully. "They might capture us and try to make slaves of us."

"Oh, but we don't have any choice. It says so right here in the—"

"Not on your life!" bawled Mose and he ran over to make a grab at Beenie. The girl's account of the *Gideon Oz Guide to Required Adventure Activities* had made quite an impression on the thoughtful boy. What was his wonder when they had come across a copy of the *GOGTRAA* itself during their new-found leisure to explore the captain's bookshelves!

Incontinently the young Australian seized the volume from

Beenie's hand and hurled it overboard. Not for him was any engagement in an endless cycle of 'We're going to imprison you and turn you into slaves and/or creatures just like us.'

A little bashfully Beenie agreed with Mose's reasoning (or emotion), and the ship sailed past the island. This caused regret to the spy-glass-equipped natives, who, indeed, had been planning to act in true Oz fashion, as Mose had predicted, and enslave whoever might land from the good ship Crescent Moon.

In the end the ship arrived at an island that appeared deserted. This was not the case, of course, and Malchor the Evil Wizard (you remember him, don't you?) was living at the top of the island's central mountain.

Beenie, upon seeing the peak, and considering her dislike of climbing (though she was an excellent runner), stared at the pile of rock as if it were some kind of vast personal insult.

"Come on, Been, think of it as a chance to broaden your horizons," suggested Mose. "The view will be incredible from up there." Sabrina chose to regard this as an attempt of Mose's to be amusing, but she was *not* amused.

Presently, with Captain Salt bringing up the rear, the three were trudging up the rocky path. After some time they came to the tower of Malchor, standing its lone watch atop the mountain.

Malchor acted instantly. He welcomed them to his stately abode, then quickly trapped them as soon as they had entered. "Now I shall have three slaves to do my bidding," he gloated. "You may begin your slavery by—"

Unfortunately we will never know what Malchor's plans were, for at that very moment a cloud of pink smoke filled the foyer. When it cleared, there stood (who else?) Princess Ozma of Oz and her royal entourage. It seemed that the girl ruler actually did use that method of appearing out of nowhere. The pink smoke was not just a fancy invention of Beenie's story-teller dad!

"Why, Malchor, you're just awful mean. How could you?" said Ozma's girl-in-waiting, taking over as usual, and shaking a reproachful finger at the terrified Malchor.

Ozma also put in at least two cents' worth: "It is against the laws of Oz to practise magic," she stated authoritatively. "You must know that, yet you practise anyway."

"But we're not *in* the land of Oz," whined Malchor.

That fact made little difference to Ozma, who was about to say so when Captain Salt, tricorn hat in hands, ventured to put in: "With all due and fitting respect, your highness, what is the large notion behind your grace's sudden apparition here, at least a thousand miles from your capital?"

Ozma was framing an equally ceremonial reply when young Mose entered the lists. He'd never read an Oz book but recognized the Queen of Oz from the description in the story his chum Beenie had retailed. He'd also been annoyed in that same story by the girl ruler's high-handed entrance as a *dea ex machina* applying her untimely happy ending. Furthermore he did not feel the awe that would have constrained any properly constituted Oz buff. He blurted, "Yeah, Miss Princess, why don't you butt out? We were having fun 'til you came along." Trust Mose always to say the spontaneous frank thing—and then be made to rue it down the ages.

Princess Ozma was shocked to her shoes, so much so that she incontinently vanished in a reverse 'un-puff' of smoke and so abruptly that her entourage didn't make it along with her.

"Goodness," said Dorothy, "how awkward," while poor Beenie, 'hostess' at this long-dreamed-of and so untimely terminated interview, virtually skwatted in contrition. In deep abasement she tried to make amends for her chum's misprision.

"Oh, Princess Dorothy... *it is* Dorothy, isn't it?" There hadn't even been time to make introductions! "Can you ever forgive us?! This is terrible. I've been looking forward all my life to this moment, and now—" The unfortunate girl burst into tears, while Mose began on a lifetime attempt at expiation of the sin of *lèse majesté*.

“Scarecrow...?” said Dorothy uncertainly.

Beenie clapped a hand to her brow. Good heavens. She’d been forgetting who she (half) was: Quick as a wink she altered attitude and in the Scarecrow’s rustly voice she said, “Hnhhnh, just my little joke, my dear. Everything is a bit inexplicable, isn’t it? You’re wondering how I got here...”

“Even more, I’m wondering how you grew lovely long brown hair in three weeks,” interrupted the Princess ironically. “That’s when I saw you last—as you were off, in the company of Nick Chopper, to return to your corncob house.”

Curiously, Beenie’s clap to her head still had not reminded her of the dead giveaway. The Scarecrow’s hat was the first thing that had blown away in the instant of the man/girl’s ejection from the wounded aircraft. [Oz collector fanatics may want to do a search of the floor of the Pacific off Funafuti for a unique Oz-related artifact.] There was now not the slightest point in pretending to be the actual original Scarecrow, no matter how striking the resemblance below the hair-line.

Beenie/Scarecrow suggested they pass into the reception room of Wizard Malchor’s tower, where they all took seats. The sorcerer scurried about providing herb tea and crumpets, and then Beenie told the tale of her adventures: the miracle in the Flanders attic, the splendid prize for the beat masquerade costume, and the disaster at eight thousand feet up.

Dorothy got to the kernel at once. “But how amazing,” she cried, addressing the Scarecrow side of Beenie’s personality (Scarecrow number two, as she began to think of him now). “You—that is, your picture—came to life just like that? You have no idea how?”

“No, princess,” said the canvas man ruefully. “Not a clue. But let me say this—which may seem somewhat startling: I remember the whole of my life as a living straw man in Oz up to the time I sat—stood, rather for my portrait by Mr. Neill. After that everything is a blank until I found myself speaking to this

young lady—" Here he pointed to himself: presumably his 'better half'. "—in the attic of the house in New Jersey."

"It *is* strange," agreed Dorothy, with finger and thumb to face thoughtfully. "And you say this happened early last summer? That's just when the Wizard did his marvelous refurbishing job on you—on 'Scarecrow number one', that is to say!" she ended in some confusion.

"We will just have to go to Oz to find the ex-plan-a-tion," said Tik-Tok the Clockwork Man, who, of Ozma's erstwhile entourage, had not spoken until now. The Doubtful Dromedary had *still* not said anything.

"We'll certainly have to go to Oz," agreed Dorothy. "We can't stay here on this near-desert island—delightful as it is," she hastened to add to their host, who had dropped all blustering and was now doing his best to ingratiate himself with his obvious superiors.

Beenie was still inclined to sniffle. "Oh, I feel so bad about Princess Ozma. Do you think she'll ever forgive us?"

"Oh, sure," said Dorothy insouciantly. "Actually, the little faux pas may have been an eye-opener for Her Grace. I'll admit quite frankly that Ozma has—well, I won't say 'spoiled'—more than one adventure by turning up too early and resolving everything. I think she's probably looking at us in the Magic Picture at this very moment, but she may hold off doing anything and see how we get on by ourselves."

The New Jersey girl allowed herself to be a little cheered by those words and took her part in the plans the group made to move on.

"Watch your head. Here I come," warned the voice of Jack Pumpkinhead as he flourished a pie plate still steaming from the oven. Jack was watching his own head as he advanced; it was in the pie.

"To think that you can even bake," commented the Scarecrow. He was paying Jack a visit and had got as far as the front porch of the pumpkin bungalow before the pie arrived.

"Yes, I can bake even too," bragged the pumpkinheaded man. "At least I think this is equally done on all sides."

"Shall we test it?" asked the straw-stuffed man and he pressed ever so lightly with his cottongloved finger. "Seems perfect. I think you've put your all into this pie."

"No, only my head," corrected Jack and he began to hum "I Poured My Head into a Pie", an old hit from the thirties—for of course the raw batter of a pumpkin pie is a near-liquid. "Nothing goes to waste here," he resumed.

"You can say that again," concurred his friend.

"Nothing goes to waste here," dutifully obeyed the hollow-headed one.

The situation was this: that Jack Pumpkinhead had just carved himself a new head after selecting one of the larger varieties from his pumpkin patch. This event coincided with the arrival from the Emerald City of his ancient friend the Scarecrow on an errand. It was all most opportune. The straw man's mission was to place an order for a baker's dozen of pies for the use of Princess Ozma at some social do she was planning. The superannuated head would do for a test run. Of course to fill Ozma's order Jack would use field-fresh specimens.

"Mmh," breathed the Scarecrow as the two sat at a rustic table under an apple tree and admired the confection, "looks almost good enough to eat. I wish we could."

"Are you kidding?" retorted Jack P. "I'm not a cannibal."

"Interesting question," mused the thoughtful Scarecrow. "I wonder what you call a creature that eats itself:

Autoprophagous?"

At this point another voice was heard from. The renowned Sawhorse of Oz had come over table-side (still pulling the Red Wagon). "Don't I deserve a piece of pie like anyone else?" was what the horse said. He couldn't eat it any more than the others could but simply made a practice of requiring his rights at all times.

Jack hastened to slice him a wedge. He'd been cutting into the pie to test its doneness, flexibility, and tensile strength.

"I love all sorts of pies," confided the wooden horse, "especially key lime pies. Their green color reminds me of the Emerald City—which, by the way, shouldn't we be returning to?" Sawks was always happiest running somewhere, not staying in one place.

Jack ignored him and addressed the Scarecrow. "I'm so glad you are feeling yourself again." Word of the straw man's brief indisposition and spectacular cure had spread all over Oz.

"Who, me? I never felt better in my life. Just look: I'm the picture of my former self."

This was quite literally true. The Scarecrow's painted likeness from the royal gallery at the capital, combined with the Wizard's super-glue, was doing its job just as programmed. The straw fellow was never again to feel fatigue.

"Maybe you should change your name now," suggested the Sawhorse, as he trod around in his piece of pie. He had the idea that baked pumpkin was a sovereign polish for gold hoofs.

"What's wrong with being called 'Scarecrow'?" the bearer of that designation wanted to know. He'd always been known as just "Scarecrow", or "the Scarecrow", or "His Majesty the Scarecrow". Only his most intimate friends sometimes called him "Scarekers" in English pet-name fashion (as 'Twickenham' is called "Twickers" or someone named 'Cottrill' is termed "Cotters").

"Oh, nothing very much. Only, if Mr. P. can change his head, you might like to change your name. It's not very appropriate. You haven't scared a crow in decades."

That seemed to exhaust the subject, but in fact the Sawhorse had hit upon a tender point. Secretly the Scarecrow would have liked to have the name 'Lawrence'.

"Can I have another piece?" asked the Sawhorse.

"*May* you have another piece'," corrected Jack, ever the language purist. "Certainly," he went on, and dished up a good quarter of the remainder of the pie, into which the Sawhorse stepped daintily.

"Tell me, Jack," said the Scarecrow, making conversation, "how do you know when it's time to change heads?"

"Oh, I just do it automatically once a month," informed Jack. "The old head is good and moldy after thirty days."

Just as the Scarecrow was about to say something or other in reply an apple dropped out of the overspreading tree and landed in the Sawhorse's newly bestridden portion of pie. "Drat!" exclaimed the horse.

"Sqwack! sqwack!" sounded a cry from the branches above. "Look out below!" A second apple fell into the unserved portion of pie on the rustic table.

"Knock it off!" commanded the Scarecrow.

"I'm just trying to get your attention," squawked a bright chartreuse creature from a limb at a safe distance.

Jack P. was the peace-maker—or shall we say, the piece-server. He mildly offered the parrot newcomer a slice of pie. "Might as well," he urged. "You're the only one of us who can actually eat it."

The Sawhorse said nothing but "The blarney's spread too thick."

The three friends didn't at first know what to make of the new arrival. It was no one they knew. The bird was not slow to introduce himself. "I know *you*," he boasted. "And I'm the wizard Malchor's pet parrot. My name is Papuga."

"And who is the wizard Malchor when he's at home?" queried the Scarecrow. "I've never heard of him."

"A powerful enchanter who owns salt pans on the Isle of Estic!" At that the well-read straw man guessed that the isle

might lie somewhere in the *Nonestic* Ocean.

“But I’ve come here with dramatic news!” cried the excitable parrot. “Maybe even treasonous or criminal news. There’s another Scarecrow abroad! just like you—only get this!—with long brown hair.”

At that the Scarecrow scratched his bald burlap pate. “Then it’s definitely not me,” he opined.

“Oh, no, by no means,” reassured Papuga. “I realized that at once. I knew right away it was a case of *lése majesté*, you being an ex-king, of course. I knew there had to be laws here in Oz forbidding anyone to shape-representations of the royal Scarecrow. Just think: if imitations of you were placed out in fields to be blown at by wind and rain: why, it would bring your fame and glory into disrepute! I had to let you know that your shape was being taken in vain!”

The Scarecrow was inclined to take a less drastic view of the affair. “It would seem that Malchor’s domain is not in the land of Oz,” he pointed out. “Maybe Scarecrow-resembling creatures way off there wouldn’t be much of a threat. In any case, no laws of Oz, real or imagined, have been broken—at least until such time as the masquerader might come to this country.”

“‘Until’,” echoed Jack Pumpkinhead and the Sawhorse. They knew that Oz exercised a magnet-like effect on all who wanted to go there—and who didn’t?

The realm of Malchor was the entire (though that wasn't saying much) Isle of Estic. The isle extended only a few miles in each direction from the castle that dominated the central peak. Outside the castle walls, on a gentler slope than that up which our travelers had toiled, spread a great (magically) irrigated garden (Estic lay in the horse latitudes and it virtually never rained there) where Malchor grew strange herbs and curious comestibles that he hoped one day to be able to use to enslave people.

The enchanter also worked with fell substances, chiefly salt, that he gathered in salt pans that ringed the island's perimeter at high-tide level. He had to gather and process the product all by himself, his island domain being in truth so 'desert' except for himself and his hitherto faithful parrot.

Malchor believed his magically worked-over salt to be mind-altering, and he was dead keen to try it out. That was mainly why he wanted slaves. What was the good of mind-altering salt if you had no minds to alter? The Estic salt tasted like usual table salt but was blue. (Good thing actually: If 'our' salt was blue they couldn't confuse it in hospitals with sugar and serve it to infants who promptly curl up and die*.) The salt had a hallucinatory effect on those who ate it and it could produce a mental state like schizophrenia. Malchor knew; he'd tried it.

However, at the moment the wizard was trying furiously to impress his unexpected guests with his goodness, so he kept the bulk of his secrets to himself. He wouldn't hear of their leaving all abruptly and he laid himself out to entertain them in a style befitting the augustness of the visitors. A Princess, no less—and Malchor hated like fire that a Queen had escaped him. That very first night he threw a ball in their honor: well, as far as

* See Finberg, L., et al: "Mass accidental salt poisoning in infancy", *Journal of American Medical Association*: 184: 1963: p. 187
Gauthier, R., et al: "Accidental salt poisoning in a hospital nursery", *Australian Paediatric Journal*: 5: 1969: p. 101. Editor's note.

seven people (including a dromedary) can be a ball.

Everyone was expected to be in attendance but in the interval of waiting for the festivities to begin the various new arrivals grew very curious as to the appointments of the enchanter's tower keep where they so unplannedly found themselves. While Dorothy and Tik-Tok entered the library and became absorbed in leafing through Malchor's collection of books of magic, Beenie/Scarecrow and Mose sneaked away to hunt for the magician's laboratory.

"I wonder what kind of wizardry he does," mused Beenie aloud.

"Maybe he transforms little girls into scarecrows," posited Mose.

"Oh, that's old hat. I think more likely he turns little boys into frogs," returned Beenie as good as she got.

"Gee, I hope not."

"Shh! Someone's coming."

The two hid behind an arras that graced the wall of the stone corridor - but after a few minutes they came out again. "It must have just been the wind you heard," said Mose.

"Funny: I was sure I heard a kind of a rushing fluttering noise. There *is* a parrot around here, you know. Did you see it? right after we got here: during that awful scene down in the entrance hall—"

Both children blushed to remember it.

"It seemed to be as startled us we were at everything that happened," pursued Beenie. "I wonder where it's got to."

Now it was Mose's turn to shush. "Now I do hear somebody coming!"

The children ducked out of the passageway onto an opportune balcony and after a moment, peeping round, saw the black-robed Malchor sweep by, muttering to himself.

"Hnn, hnn!" he snickered. "Just one wee bite of the banquet food and the fools will be in my power."

Of course the intrepid adventurers had to know more about what foul plot their host was hatching so they did not hesitate

to tiptoe along at a safe distance behind the magician and they saw him enter the laboratory they had been in search of.

Used to solitude and not needing to watch his words, Malchor failed to shut the door behind him so our heroes had a clear view within.

Well, 'laboratory': it was more like a music room. Upon a sturdy oak music stand lay a leather-bound book to which the wizard directed his attention. Then he drew towards him a great gilt harp that was attached at the foot to a stone pillar. Beenie and Mose gasped (but not *too* loud). As Malchor began to play the harp visibly came to life and the children saw that it had not a foot but feet! of scrollwork, on which it now attempted to run away.

Like many people who are much alone, the wizard kept up a running vocal commentary with himself. "I'll learn your secret, Siko Pompus!" he crooned. "I should be able to do any magic a mere leprechaun can do. I too will conjure a pot of gold by my playing. Only: what's the tune...?"

The children stared, mystified, as Malchor strummed one melody after another. They sounded like Irish tunes, as far as the two listeners could determine: "Mother Machree", "When Irish Eyes are Smiling", "She is Far from the Land", "I am of Ireland", and funnily enough "Hello, Dolly". But if the player was performing them to some purpose that purpose did not appear.

"Drat!" cried the wizard and gave the strings a stinging slap. "I'll squeeze that magic melody out of you yet. Let's see now: I've got another book of *Songs of Erin*."

Malchor slid the instrument back to its apparent home position close to the pillar and left the chamber. The kids ducked back and under another convenient arras.

But the next person to come along the corridor was Tik-Tok, who approached calling out for the host magician. Instead he saw Mose and Beenie creeping out a bit shamefast from behind the hanging.

"Oh, it was you two I was real-ly look-ing for," declared the

mechanical man. "Do-ro-ty was won-der-ing where you were."

"We were trying to find Malchor's laboratory," Beenie/Scarecrow explained. "We're not really sure this is it ...and we haven't had a proper look at it yet. how's about if you let the Princess know you found us, Tik-Tok? and we'll be along right away."

When the copper man had toddled off the two explorers finally entered the laboratory/conservatory (in the musical sense) properly. Beenie at once darted to the music stand where it didn't take her long to find a little golden key that dangled and caught the light.

"I wonder..." she said to herself with a bright surmise and looked over speculatively at the goldgreen harp that might once, for all she knew, through Tara's halls...

But at that moment she heard the mysterious magician returning and she quickly dropped the key in the pocket of the Scarecrow kaftan.

"What, may I ask, are you two - so HONORED - guests doing here?" enquired Malchor with much hand-washing and every mark of obsequiousness.

"Princess Dorothy sent us to look for you," lied Beenie deftly.

A flurry of raindrops fell as the Scarecrow and Jack Pumpkinhead emerged from the pumpkin bungalow in the fruited field. Waiting outside was the patient Sawhorse; when he wasn't wildly galloping somewhere he could stand still for hours. The parrot Papuga was squawking away quietly to himself on the branch of the apple tree where he had remained since his arrival. He hadn't bothered to eat his proffered share of the jacks-head pie.

Suddenly the quiet mood was broken by a shriek from the far-traveled bird. "Yes, Malchor!" it cried, seemingly speaking to itself or at least not to anyone present. "I hear you, mighty master! Right! your Papuga is a naughty bird to fly away from Estic Isle. Yes, yes indeed! I'll come back at once. I am your humble parrot Papuga!"

Without a syllable of goodbye the bird launched himself on verdian wings and flew off in the direction whence he had first come.

The explanation of the curious passage was that at that moment Wizard Malchor was gazing at his parrot in a crystal ball (one of several in his possession). He could see the bird just as plain and incidentally could also see something of his surroundings. When he recognized the famous (original) Scarecrow and also the by no means uncelebrated pumpkin-headed man he knew at once where Papuga was.

"Good Papuga... nice bird: it's time to return home," he suggested insinuatingly. Then he blew into a little whistle specifically designed to be able to reach the ears of any familiar of the wizard's (Papuga was the only one) no matter how far away he might be. In fact, Papuga was fifty miles inside the land of Oz, not to mention the expanses of ocean, land, and desert he had had to cross to get to the pumpkin cottage. The whistle once heard was the command imperative.

"Goodbye, Papuga," muttered the Sawhorse for no particular reason, as the three friends watched the bird flutter

out of sight. The Scarecrow changed the subject by adverting to the shower, which he was glad to have been able to escape. And then Jack got into the act by saying, "Oh, look, here comes a rainbow."

In very fact, a beautiful graceful rainbow was arching over the pumpkin patch. When the foot of it touched the ground (minus pot of gold as far as any of those present could make out) a sprightly girlish figure could be seen dancing down the arc. She jumped off lightly, skidded on a wet pumpkin-but recovered with remarkable aplomb, and frolicked across the field toward the waiting spectators.

"Polychrome!" ejaculated both Jack P. and the Scarecrow, and the latter went on to call out: "You are always welcome—with or without a rainbow." The Sawhorse said nothing but "What's *she* doing here?"

"Don't be silly, Scareks," laughed the Rainbow's daughter, springing vivaciously to the side of the duo waiting on the porch. "You know I can't come to earth without the rainbow to bring me down... How is everyone?"

Courtesies were exchanged, then presently the Scarecrow began to go into detail about his siege of weakness earlier in the year and how the Wizard of Oz had solved the problem. "I've been bonded, you know."

"Oh? How does that work exactly?" enquired the rainbow maiden politely.

"Well, they cut up an original oil painting of me and glued it around what was left of my former self, then attached it all over indissolubly." Here the straw man pirouetted on one toe to display his person from all sides.

"You look fabulous: better than I've seen you in years!" bubbled Polychrome with enthusiasm. "I dare say you're fit for anything now."

"Oh, no doubt," agreed his ex-majesty, suddenly turning thoughtful. "I may have to put my fitness to the test."

Poly was appropriately piqued in her curiosity and asked to hear more when the Scarecrow related what had just tran-

spired. "I wonder," he posited to his friends: "Do you think I ought to go look up this person who's masquerading as myself? It could be quite a hoot."

"Why not?" put in Jack. "You don't have anything else to do, do you?, now that you've delivered Ozma's instructions."

"Well, no," admitted the straw man. "But then: how to get to the Isle of Estic? Sawks here couldn't transport me further than to the rim of the ocean—if that far."

"No, and anyway, after I get this pie order baked I'll need him and the red wagon to deliver them to our dear queen," summed up Jack Pumpkinhead.

"I know what," proposed Polychrome. "You could come with me, over the rainbow, and then we could ask Dad what's to be done."

In the circumstances, that seemed like the best plan and the Scarecrow was not long in falling in with it. "How do we get up the rainbow?" he asked Poly.

"The same way I came down," replied the Rainbow's daughter. "It's so easy—once you know how."

The sun glancing off still lingering clouds insured that the rainbow, still almost as good as new, was waiting in the wings and Polychrome gave 'Lawrence' Scarecrow a hand to lead him to it. He felt a bit selfconscious raising a foot to place it on an unsubstantial shimmer but when Poly did it and moved on higher the straw man ventured to do the same. Indeed! the rainbow seemed to operate like an escalator and gave an adequate foothold, at least to a flimsy figure of canvas and straw.

At the shoulder the two turned to wave at their erstwhile companions, who in turned waved wooden extremities.

Incidentally the assumption of Polychrome and the Scarecrow into the skies was also witnessed by one other. He happened to be the possessor of a magical all-seeing crystal ball.

"So that's, presumably, the real Scarecrow," mused Malchor. "Who then is this other—whom I'm currently sheltering?" He knew it was a little girl in disguise but how she

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came to be that way; what the magical mechanics of the transformation were, was as unknown to him as to young Sabrina herself. They all of them still had much to find out.

Several days had passed since the wizard Malchor had called his parrot Papuga back from Oz. Though apparently with alacrity the parrot had come back reluctantly and he dawdled on the way.

"Papuga, my pet! You've returned," cried the magician with false high spirits. "Trying to run away from poor old forlorn Malchor," he tsked. "You gave me quite a fright."

"Oh, no, no, I would never run away from Malchor!" squawked the bird with matching falseness. "Malchor always treats poor Papuga so nicely."

"The fact remains that you departed," the wizard pointed out. "What caused you to fly to Oz?"

"I was so scared!" declared Papuga.

"Of what, my little pet?"

"That Scarecrow!"

"The one here, you mean? Indeed: what could you find scary about it?"

"It has two heads—and four each of hands and legs! That's enough to scare me!"

"Come, come, you're not a crow. And our visitor is not a scareparrot."

"It's what's inside the apparent Scarecrow that frightens me. There's a little girl in there!"

This was no news to Malchor. *He* had waited around, unlike Papuga, to bear the whole story from the lips of Sabrina Amerul herself. He changed the subject. "So that was the genuine Scarecrow I saw you with in the crystal ball." He remained thoughtful, then held out a hand for the parrot to light on. "Come then, my naughty Papuga. Let us put you back into your cage."

"Oh, the cage! Not that! Not that!" squawked the luckless bird. After his taste of freedom the cage was now more anathema to aim than ever. The wizard shushed him and turned the key.

Thinking of keys, Malchor muttered to himself as was his

wont, "Somebody's stolen the harp-lock key. I just wonder who it was." But he wasn't really in much doubt. Idly he turned to leafing through the second volume of *Songs of Erin*. "Could it be 'Did Your Mother Come from Ireland'?" he mused.

A knock was heard at the door of the music room, then Princess Dorothy entered diffidently bearing a tray of snacks which she placed on a console table. "Oh, Mr. Malchor," she gushed, "I just can't get enough of your onion and garlic chips."

'No, indeed,' thought the wizard. 'That's the whole idea.' Aloud, he only expressed pleasure at his guest's approval of his culinary arts. "You may take a sack of the genuine Estic onions and garlic home with you when you go," he urged insinuatingly.

"Thank you! Oh, and please: teach me how to make the dip... But, I hope I am not interrupting you in anything..."

"I was only about to play upon the harp," Malchor demurred. "Irish themes are my favorite. Do you know any?"

"What about 'I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen'? I always liked that," offered the girl.

Malchor played it—to general applause by Dorothy and even the engaged Papuga, who knew which side his bread was buttered. '—But that's not it,' the enchanter constated to himself.

Dorothy suggested "The Store Outside Dan Murphy's Door" but had to hum it for the harpist, who for a moment was hopeful but when he had completed the rendition found no pot of gold about.

Polychrome and the Scarecrow kept mounting ever higher. It wasn't very long before they arrived at the high center point of the spectacular rainbow arch and there they found themselves standing before a great cloud castle.

Poly gently nudged the Scarecrow to step onto the cottonwooleny cloud, which he found to have a delightful springy consistency. It was something like walking on a particularly inviting trampoline. They followed a path to great doors which opened mysteriously as the travelers approached.

Once inside the rainbow-columned hall they could make out a dais at the remote end and there on a chair of state (not really a 'throne', for Father Rainbow was not exactly the monarch of anything) sat a colorful ageless figure in varicolored robes: veils really, line thin sheets of mist. This was Polychrome's parent, but at the moment he appeared to be in conference.

Before the dais stood a tiny man no taller than a cheese box (you know how big they are!). He had bushy red whiskers, a green coat, and an old hat with a white owl's feather stuck in it. He was talking and gesticulating with wild gestures.

The newcomers guessed that the little man had himself only just been ushered in for he seemed to be at the start of a catalogue of woes. "It all happened this way," related the suppliant, in a brogue we will not attempt to convey. "I had just got at me ease on a hank of clover and was tuning up to have a go on the old harp when a rainbow appeared. Well, there *had* been a shower not that long before, so I put aside me instrument and stepped off to look for the pot of gold.

"Y'know, if there are two things that are linked up with pots o' gold, it'll be rainbows and leprechauns. But there's a difference. Rainbows come furnished with their own gold-pots that turn up fresh at each occasion. Not so with us leprechauns: We're obliged to find our own pots, and where if not at those rainbow ends—whenever we're lucky enough to be on the spot when one comes up—or down, that is.

"I, as chance would have it, was fresh out of gold, so I never hesitated a minute but was off to claim the one that was sure to lie nearby. Yes, and I found it too and was a-claspin' it to me bosom and turnin' back—when—"

Father Rainbow and the two newcomers (who had so far exchanged no more than a sketchy wave) were all agog at the tale. Nobody spoke while they waited for the denouement.

"—there was an almighty thunderin' o' great wings ahint me, and I turned to see the most awful big bird—or some'n—in creation. A griffin, I think it's called: as much lion as eagle—but so huge. Somehow I always thought griffins were only about the size of buzzards.

"The creature alighted and a black-robed figure leapt from its back and made straight for me. I knew he was after me pot o' gold but I swore to meself I'd be destroyed afore I'd give it up. But no: the bat-like shape sped to me abandoned harp end seized that up, instead.

"Oh, what a tease was this: should I save me gold and lose me harp? Or the other way round? I couldn't keep both: that was clear. Well, a pot in the arms was worth a harp in the bush. But I had a last string to me bow—if not to me harp.

"'Take the instrument!' I yelled, 'and the divvil take thee! But ye'll nivver know the tune that conjures up the gold!

"The black figure nivver paused but caught up me harp, bounded in one leap to the back of the griffin, and was off in a swirl of last raindrops," ended the story teller dramatically.

Soft-hearted Polychrome sprang impulsively to the wee leprechaun's side and put an arm around his shoulders. "There, there, don't fret," she pleaded. "Daddy will think of some way for you to get back your harp." Here she looked up beseechingly at the venerable figure in the chair of state.

"I don't think that is going to be very easy," discouraged the rainbow lord. "There seems no clue to who the cloaked robber might be, and though the incident has only just taken place—"

"Oh, no, your lordship," broke in the little elf in the midst

of his distress. "'Twas many a month ago!"

"Wot!" yelled Poly's pa, forgetting his dignity. "'Then why are you only now applying to me?"

"Well, sure, there was me pot o' gold," explained Siko Pompus (for it was he). "Before that was well and truly spent I had no need of rainbows. And if I missed the true old harp there was the comfort of all the pepper-cheese I could buy and the flasks of poteen and the charms o' the dancin' girls—"

Here Polychrome withdrew her consoling arm hurriedly. After all...!

The Father of the Rainbow admitted himself not only disgusted but stumped. "People always think," he remarked pettishly, "that because someone's the Lord of the Rainbow and goes back to the time of Noah he should have the answer to any problem. But frankly, I haven't a clue. What you need is someone with a lot of brains, a sort of master detective, to sort out the evidence and come up with leads..."

"'Tis jist as I thought," wailed the hapless leprechaun. "'Tis hopeless!"

"—unless, as I say," went on the Rainbow, "you can find somebody with a different mind-set than mine."

"Oh, father!" interjected Polychrome. "It sounds like you're describing the wise Scarecrow exactly. He's got the finest mind in six countries—and it's just been overhauled—along with his body—and made sharper than ever. Don't you think—"

Papa Rainbow was distinctly pleased with his most adventurous and experienced daughter. Once again she'd plucked his chestnuts from the fire. "The very thing, my dear!" he boomed. "We'll give this assignment to the famous and all-wise Scarecrow of Oz."

"What assignment is that?" stuttered the man of straw, for whom events had been moving at breakneck speed. And what about his own mission? They had not even got around to mentioning that yet.

"It may be dangerous and fraught with risks," warned the rainbow father.

"And...?" queried the straw man with a soupçon of impatience. "I'm no cowardy-custard—at least, if there's no fire involved."

"There's very little fire *in* this assignment," soothed the old gentleman. "Then you'll go?"

"Oh, very well," agreed the genial Scarecrow. "Maybe I can combine it with my own quest."

"What quest is that?" inquired the other solicitously.

But here young (well, actually she was incredibly old, though ever youthful-looking) Polychrome broke in and with a rapid spate of words briefed her parent on how the land lay. "So you see, Dad," she ended, "we're off to the Isle of Estic to check on this alternative Scarecrow. We were hoping perhaps you could drop a small cloudburst there and then we'd ride the rainbow..."

At this the rainbow elder turned to rifle through a rol-o-dex file on an end-table beside his chair. "Let me see: Mason, Eldorado... Emerald City: no. Equator. Erebus. Ah, here we are: Estic, Isle of." He scanned briefly. "Oh dear," he sighed. "No can do. It says here Estic lies in the horse latitudes. It never rains, you see..."

"Hmmf!" hmmfed the Scarecrow, scarcely pleased. "Oh, never mind. Come on, Mr. Leprechaun—"

"Siko Pompus is the name, Y'r Worship," inserted the little man, wanting to get things right from the start.

"Psycho? Pompous?" wondered the Scarecrow. "I don't automatically go for folks that are either the one or the other. Still, we'll have to see how we get on..." Then he bethought himself of an important point. "Honored Lord of the Rainbow," he buttered up, "you cannot afford us a rainbow road to Estic, it seems, but could you spare us your daughter and my dear friend, Polychrome, to guide us on our way?"

"Granted!" cried the Rainbow in good humor, relieved to show himself to be of *some* use.

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

Everybody was assembled once again in the dining room for the usual banquet. That would be: Princess Dorothy, Tik-Tok the Clockwork Man, Beenie/Scarecrow, Mose from Awz, Cap'n Salt of the good ship *Crescent Moon*, the Doubtful Dromedary, and our host, Malchor the Magician. Not present was Papuga Parrot who was still in Coventry in his cage. The party were all getting fat (those who could eat) from the forced feeding. Some awful inertia had got into them and they rarely spoke any more of leaving the spellbound island.

Tik-Tok, in fact, was the only one not partaking and even he sipped at a cup of lubricating oil. The rest sat with knife and fork at the ready for launching into the chicken calabrese that Dorothy, as honorary hostess, was passing round. As garnishes there were red-hot chili peppers, radishes, onion, and garlic, and to drink was a special punch that had not only a punch but a kick to it.

The Doubtful Dromedary, oscillating his jaws over a silver bowl full of raw onions, said, "I swear: these are the best-tasting onions I have ever eaten."

Princess Dorothy served herself another helping of chicken calabrese.

Captain Salt, perhaps not surprisingly, praised the blue salt, characterizing it as particularly toothsome.

Wizard Malchor urged everyone to eat hearty. He himself, if anyone had noticed, was being rather selective.

Beenie and Mose made great play of passing dishes back and forth but if anyone had paid particular attention he would have observed that they never actually swallowed anything, unless it be the odd tomato or an innocuous lettuce leaf. The kids had not neglected the tip they had overheard.

"I'll have another glass of the punch, please," said Dorothy.

"The salted herring are just the way a sea captain likes them," asserted Cap'n Salt. "Excuse me too," he went on, reaching over, "if I add a little of this satisfying blue salt to them."

Malchor congratulated himself on having taken a dose of *Tagamet A* to counter the potential effects of such viands as he did permit himself to touch. It would hardly look right if he himself never ate any of what he was so assiduously urging the others to gorge on.

When the feast at last drew to a close Beenie went straight to her appointed bedroom. It was in a tower, with a nice view out over the rather rocky sandy island. She took the precaution of locking her door. She was not fooled with respect to the island's overlord as a number of her companions appeared to be.

As she took off her scarecrow outfit the girl deposited on the rightstand the purloined key to the captive harp.

Suddenly she heard a sound behind her. Lock or no lock, Wizard Malchor was in her bedroom! For one mad moment she wondered if the enchanter had come to attack her, but then she remembered that nobody ever made sexual advances on eleven-year-old girls in Oz books, and she sighed with relief.

Malchor was calmly walking to the night table and picking up the key. "Now I wonder how this happens to be in your possession?" he said with a smirk.

Beenie was caught out.

"Never mind," soothed Malchor. "We all steal a little." That relieved the girl of the need of adding further lying to her tins.

"I have some plans for you, my winsome young lady," went on Malchor, "when presently the others leave me. I want you to stay here—on the Isle of Estic. I need your help... with something."

Giving the shuddering Beenie no time to reply Malchor disappeared through a two-way mirror in the wall.

Failing the possibility of a rainbow descent on the Isle of Estatic, the three cloudborne travelers in Oz waited around for the next rainbow that *was* going down. Better to take that than just sit around doing nothing on a cloudbank.

The rainbow chanced to get let down in a village in the Gillikin country: the home of the apple elves. Although it was now early January the apple elves didn't mind and they were holding an Apple Elves' Apple Harvest Festival. A banner stretching across above the yellow brick road announced as much. Booths selling candied apples and apple fritters were set up along the road.

"I don't think we're going to come across me darlin' harp any time soon," mourned Siko Pompus.

"Nor I my alter ego," agreed the Scarecrow.

But Polychrome bubbled, "This is an adventure! Let's relax and join in the fun here."

The leprechaun was not hard to persuade as soon as he discovered that certain booths were offering cider, both mild *and* hard. For a while it looked as if this bunch were embarking on an eating binge to match that of the sojourners on Estatic, the way Siko tore into the apple fritters and even Poly, who usually dined off dewdrops and moonbeam sandwiches, consumed an entire candied Jonathan. The Scarecrow held an apple with coconut stuck all over it but he didn't do anything with it and finally gave it to a little boy who passed by appleless.

Presently a murmurous uproar was heard from a field at the end of the town and our travelers strolled that way. A chubby elf bustled up to them. "Oh, hey, folks," he greeted. "Would you be willing to take over my bed in the bed race? My family's deserted me; I can't find my kids anywhere."

The threesome shrugged. Until next rainbow departure time they had nothing better to do. The elf led the way to a big brass bed that stood dejectedly beside a rail fence at the edge of the meadow. It had wheels attached at the four legends.

"You can steer it," assured the bed owner. "The wheels aren't stationary. They swivel around."

That was all the lessons they had. Already the contestants were positioning themselves at the starting line. The beds were ranged four abreast the width of the road. At least sixteen beds were taking part, four ranks deep. The big brass bed was hastily trundled into place to take up a pitiful rear.

The racing vehicles covered a broad spectrum of appearances. Some were mounted on high axles that could be turned to right or left and might even override any little daybed that got in the way. Some rode on bicycle wheels which could be controlled by ropes in the hands of a driver actually perched upon the bed. Some beds still carried their mattresses while others, for the sake of considerations of weight, were stripped down to the bare framework with perhaps a sheet of plywood spread to support any possible passengers. Most of the beds were steel-framed but there was even one old wooden four-poster among the hopefuls.

It was decided that Polychrome would ride on the 'prow' of the brass bed, as titular spirit and to urge on the laboring male contestants in 'our' team. She weighed hardly more than thistle-down (even containing the candied apple) so it was not judged that she would be a drag on their speed.

Problematical remained the ability of a tiny leprechaun, no taller than a "cheese box", and a fifteen-pound weakling like the Scarecrow to propel the bedstead. Still, the latter had once been able to pick up and carry competently half of Dorothy Gale, as we see proven by an illustration in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, so perhaps all was not hopeless here.

The man with the flag waved the contestants away. Down the road sped the beds with just incredible verve. The straw man and the leprechaun, each at his end of the back-frame, struggled and grunted, but they were not much smaller and/or weaker than the elves themselves so they managed to hold their own. Already two beds at the rear (one the poor old four-poster) were tending to fall behind. Our heroes saw their chance and

shoved into the next-back-most rank.

Now Poly spotted an opening in the third rank and urged her cavaliers on. Five hundred feet of the course had been covered so far. But for some reason the Scarecrow and Siko did not forge ahead. 'Was it some mysterious prescience on their part? For suddenly a wheel flew off the box-bed a dozen lengths before them and it crashed to a halt. Had our team been nearer a pile-up could not have been avoided and there would be every chance of winning gone with the wind.

The brass bed had room to swerve aside. A moment later they passed close beside the dead bed, upon which sat a little elfin boy who had burst into tears at this lost chance.

The Scarecrow thought with longing of the Red Wagon, which just brief weeks ago had been trundling on its way to the Emerald City with its fair freight of fresh-baked pies aboard. But, 'Silly!' he said to himself; 'If I were riding in the red wagon I would not be taking part in a "bed" race!'

The race course was coming to a long low rise and now further possible disasters intervened. It was Polychrome who first sighted a bed that had not completely turned around and was now flying down directly towards them fifty yards away. Whatever were they to do?!

After one startled scream it was the work of only an instant for Poly to cram her hand in her pocket and pull it out again loaded with stardust, which she scattered about her desperately. Whew! Not a moment too soon. Slowly the brass bedstead began to rise in the air and was *just* far enough aloft for the rogue runaway to dash past beneath it and carom off further downhill.

Her scream had just had time to alert her struggling pushers, who clung onto each his brass spokes and so they were borne away on high. Incontinently the bed race was left behind.

A shout arose from the gaping onlookers. At first it was of wonderment at this gratuitous display of magic, but soon Polychrome could note a rumble of discontent. This was cheating! The bed race was to be won, she could make out from scattered

BEENIE IN OZ

furious cries, by force of arms (and legs), not magic! The brass bedstead was disqualified.

“Help!” came the strangled cry of the resolutely dangling Scarecrow.

“Help, help!” gasped the equivalently dangling Siko Pompus.

Poly had no more time to devote to the discontents of the indignant apple elves. She had her work cut out pulling and tugging to haul in her erstwhile bed-motors. At last, however, all three lay gasping on the gently rocking bedstead as it sailed serenely away.

Wizard Malchor was having trouble making up his mind as to whether he was a reformed, or a still practising, villain. At dinner butter wouldn't melt in his mouth (though everything else did) as he urged his guests to try one succulent dish after another and there was no end to his hand-kissings and assurances of friendship without end. Yet here he was at Beenie's bedroom door again; the poor girl could hardly get a wink of sleep for the importunings of her insinuating host. This time the threats were more concrete.

Sabrina woke to broad daylight to hear the lock turn in her door, and there was the wizard, shoving Mose into the room, then slamming the door again, and taking away the key.

Beenie pulled the bedclothes up to her chin and the children conferred. "We seem to have got stuck, don't we?" said Mose bewilderedly. "First it was action all the time: going somewhere or doing something. Now we've been stuck in this hole for three weeks and I'm bored. This latest little shake-up was almost fun in comparison."

"Yeah," said Beenie. "I can't figure this Malchor out. When we first got here I thought maybe he was just introverted from having been alone so long. He really blossomed out when he got a squint at Ozma. I really thought he'd turned over a new leaf. But lately here he's turned nasty again."

"Unh-hunh," agreed Mose. "Well, I must admit I never bought the goodness pose. Those suspicious things we've noticed, and overheard, on our own. But this latest gambit: giving me the bum's rush in here, pretty well sets the seal on him, I think."

"You're right. So what do we do now?"

"Escape! That's all there is left."

"And how do we do that? Admittedly the windows aren't barred but it's a fair drop to the ground. And though I've got long hair—" here Beenie lifted her chin and shook out her locks à la Miss Piggy, "it's not Rapunzel-length. You couldn't lower

yourself down that way and go for help."

"No, but we'll park ourselves at the window and just stay there 'til help comes along."

Thus it was that when Tik-Tok, Captain Salt, and the Doubtful Dromedary set out for a morning constitutional they hadn't gone far when they heard excited cries from a shallow-balconied window.

"Cap'n Salt! Tik-Tok!" screamed the youth, and Beenie/Scarecrow's head appeared as well and added its entreaties to her friend's.

"What's the matter, boy?" yelled the captain.

"We need a bit of rescue! Malchor's locked us in Beenie's room."

"What about tying the bedclothes together and shimmying down that way?" proposed the old sea-dog.

Mose had seen the same movies as his sea-going friend. He knew the routine. Quickly he and Sabrina stripped the bed, pulled down the window curtains, and knotted the whole lot together, end after end. They twisted the resultant long bunchy cord securely about a stanchion in the balcony railing, and heaved down the 'rope'.

It wasn't long enough! A drop from the end of it might easily break a limb or more on the escaping children. But here mechanical-minded (well, mechanical all over) Tik-Tok had an idea.

He marshaled the dromedary to stand four-square under where the bedclothes-line dangled, got Captain Salt to hoist him up on the very peak of the dromedary's one hump, where he also took up a firm-footed stance, then signaled for the seaman to swarm cautiously up the flesh-and-metal construction, and stand upon his, Tik-Tok's, own shoulders—or even head, if he could manage it.

Now the space between the captain's arms and the legs of the dependent Sabrina was not great at all. Both children made the transit to the ground with ease.

The quintet hastened away to behind a screening wall of giant cactus and there the children gave the others a briefing on

late developments.

“Avast and belay!” aware the captain. ““We’ve got to make tracks out of here! It’s off to the good ship *Crescent Moon* without delay.”

“Oh, but!” protested little Beenie. “We can’t go off without princess Dorothy!”

No, indeed. They mustn’t.

“Never look back... never look back,” hummed Polychrome. “Don’t look around; it wouldn’t be smart. If you look around, you may see a broken heart.”

“Now why would that be?” queried Siko Pompus. “Because we lost the bed race?”

“Oh, no.” Actually Poly seemed quite cheerful, not tragic at all. “I’m just singing... nice tune, that.”

If anybody was feeling somewhat aggrieved it was the Scarecrow. He was miffed because they—well, Poly had had this means of transportation all the while. And to think of all the time they’d wasted sitting around waiting for rainbows.

But the rainbow’s daughter had explained. “Of course I have a pocketful of stardust with me all the time. I have to have some way of levitating any time I get hung up without a rainbow’s end and have to make my way back to my home in the sky. A little stardust sprinkled on any old thing: a log, a palm leaf, a cellar door, and away I go to the nearest cloud back. I can’t steer whatever it is but if I wait long enough I almost always run into clouds and then I’m all right.

“It’s what makes me so light on my feet for dancing too. With the stardust in my pocket I’m half floating all the time. But I *am* sorry: it was silly of me not to think of it before. It was only in that emergency...” she trailed off, looking at the Scarecrow’s sulky face.

But no one could stay put out with the sunny Polychrome for long. Anyway they didn’t have time for quarreling. They had to make plans. “First, Poly dear,” said the Scarecrow taking charge, “a bit of information. We’ve been flying—I’d say south by southeast—for, say, half an hour now. How long can we expect to continue: Or is the bed, once impregnated, fly-worthy forever?”

“Oh, no,” regretted the rainbow fairy. “The stardust wears off—or maybe blows off—after a while. Then whatever you’re flying on slows down and gradually comes down—and then

you're back to square one."

"Hmm," pondered the straw one. "I've seen there's no way to steer the vessel—"

"No," offered Poly. "Heretofore I've never used the stardust but for going straight up—to the closest cloudbank."

"Why don't we go straight up now then?" queried the Scarecrow, "instead of sideways."

That one stumped the rainbow's daughter but here Siko Pompus had an idea. "Sure this brass bedstead, with mattress and pillows and all—" (he was lying on one of the latter, with knees cocked up) "must be too heavy for the stardust to fight the gravity. The best it can do is drift to one side."

Maybe that was it. And the breeze *was* to the south-southeast.

"So we just wait for the bed to come down by itself... somewhere... eventually," supposed the Scarecrow.

As it turned out, that began to happen along about sundown.

By then they were well over the Munchkin country. It was the blue of evening in the blue of Oz's easternmost land. Our travelers were not a little blue themselves. The two eat-capables were getting rather pangish and in the impromptu hustle of departure from the village of the apple elves the travelers had failed to bring along even a supply of apples.

As the bed began its long descent Siko Pompus weened he hoped they would land in an area of sandwich-hazel bushes or beside a milkshake lake. "You'd better wish we don't come down *in* such a lake," recommended the Scarecrow drily. *He* could be insouciant; he didn't need to eat.

As it turned out they might have done better in a lake: the mattress might have floated. Instead, they crashed in an oak forest. Too late the others yelled, "Sprinkle more stardust, Poly!" The maiden had her hand in her pocket when the bedstead struck the first high tree crowns and dumped them all incontinently.

Again the Scarecrow could care less. He fell headlong until caught by branches lower down. Polychrome with that stardust on her person was practically airborne and reached the ground

without injury. Even Siko Pompus, having presence of mind to cling desperately to the mattress, was in luck in being still on top of it instead of it on him when the two finally struck earth.

The first sound that there met their ears after those of their own falling was a chorus of high-pitched tee-hees. As Poly pirouetted out along the Scarecrow's limb to unhook him so he could drop on and join Siko Pompus on the ground, and the latter crawled to his feet with many a curse and groan, wild laughter echoed through the stately grove.

"Who's doin' the 'ha-ha-in' then?" demanded Siko loudly, with hands on hips.

"It's only us!" piped a tiny voice. "We're the Acornishmen! You're in Acornwall now." The rest of what the voice might have said was drowned in giggles.

The titters went on for quite some time, while our heroes tried to orient themselves in the near-darkness underneath the trees. It was lucky about the mattress. If they were forced to spend the night there they had something resilient to lie on—and bedclothes to boot.

But this was not getting them any nearer to dining. "If only we'd been swine," sighed Siko Pompus aloud. Your average leprechaun is a skilled harp craftsman and traditional harps have standards of finely wrought oak. The elf knew an oak wood when he saw one.

He'd been overheard. The tittering in the trees turned to shrill shrieks of indignation. "Don't be such a swine!" cried the voices, "as to mention such a thing." And others took up the cry: "'Swine'! That's the worst thing there is!"

"What are they getting so excited about?" queried the Scarecrow, who had spent his life in open fields, if not palaces, and was unfamiliar with the customary phenomena of forests.

"Pigs love to eat acorns," informed Siko. "And I was just after syin', 'If we was pigs—'"

"Pigs!" shrieked the Acornishmen. "Perish the thought!"

"If not pigs, what about parrots?" put in a saucy voice in quite a different timbre, and our friends heard a flutter of wings.

“Who’s there?” called the Scarecrow.

“It’s only me,” replied someone from above, in a harsh squawk. “Papuga, parrot plenipotentiary!”

“Papuga!” ejaculated the straw man. “Haven’t we met somewhere?”

“Who’s that?” answered the bird, and flew nearer the straw speaker to investigate by the last faint strains of daylight. “Why, it’s the great Scarecrow himself! That is—if you’re not Beenie.”

“No,” said the former ruler of the Emerald City. “I’m definitely not Beenie. I don’t know any Beenies except the little African-American boy who came to Oz some years ago. Do you mean him?”

“No, ‘my’ Beenie’s a different color,” said the parrot. “Poor Beenie.” Here the bird in its turn sighed deeply. “Remember I told you before about a little girl who was masquerading as yourself? She’s Beenie—and I’m afraid I left her in pretty hot water.

“Dear me. What happened?” they all wanted to know.

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

It is a truth generally recognized that, in any situation of rivalry, by the very nature of things the bad guy is going to win. That is because in any contest, where both sides may legitimately make use of skill, bravery, cleverness, education, energy, talents, etc., the bad guy may also employ lying, cheating, and treachery, and with those plusses is sure to triumph.

Just look around you at the world today.

So when the escapists on the Isle of Estic determined that they had to go back for Dorothy they were more or less doomed. There's no room for nobility in a serious contest of wills.

Somewhat hangdog they re-entered wizard Malchor's castle and went looking for their comrade. They found her in the laboratory-music-room having, of all things, tea with the magician himself. *He* turned and with every appearance of false heartiness exclaimed, "Come in—do! Princess Do and I were just wondering—weren't we, Princess Do?—where you'd got to. I've baked fresh salt-rising bread. Love you to sample it." It was like salt-water taffy wouldn't melt in his mouth.

But young Mose of Australia, true to his nature, thrust forward and declared, "You don't kid us! You're a rat-fink! We want Dorothy—and we're leaving!"

"So there, too!" put in Beenie loyally, though little considering the probable results of such expressed support.

Malchor feigned surprise. "I thought I'd confined you two trouble makers to the tower," he professed. "I can't think how you got out."

But here the company had wits enough not to go into details about the process of the children's escape.

"Never mind that," commanded manly Mose and went to seize the hand of the gaping princess and pull her to her feet.

This move finally caused the magician's pique to boil over. From an inner pocket he took a small etui, opened it, and drew out a little pinch of powdered star, then reached across the tea table and dropped it in the Aussie boy's hair. It is probable that

he silently recited a particular incantation.

The result was astonishing. Before the eyes of the assembled company the youth just shrank and shrank. Soon there was nothing left of him but a little shiny acorn-shape, which Malchor contemptuously brushed under a chair with his foot. "Anyone else?" he said, smiling.

Well! No one had much to say for himself. The two girls burst into tears. "Princess Do" (minus her magic belt) had no recourse she could mention. She did have Mouse-Queen Ramina's magic whistle but she didn't think mice would avail much in the present crisis, and besides, would they be able to cross the ocean in order to come to her aid?

Tik-Tok was able to utter a few one-syllable words like "oh, dear, what a shame. It's too bad." But what good did that do?

As for Cap'n Salt, that bluff sea-hero was no use at all when it came to magic. "What about you, sir?" the magician did enquire, but the captain just looked embarrassed.

And the Doubtful Dromedary was outside.

The scene here described proved to be some kind of a turning point. I don't know whether it finally persuaded the frustrated enchanter as to whether he was going to be 'good' or 'bad' or if the awe which he'd managed to instill in his guests now determined him on taking complete charge of their destinies or whether he was just bored with being cooped up on his island and had at last decided on a move now that means were at hand.

All I know is that before many more moments had elapsed Malchor was heard to cry, "Bustle! bustle! Caparison thy ship!" (this again to Cap'n Salt) "We sail with the tide!" He glanced at a wall chronometer. "That will be in—let me see: two hours and forty-one minutes. So you see: haste is of the essence."

The wizard's first substantive move toward departure was to unlock his faithful parrot's left claw from where it was double-anchored in its cage. The bird had crouched in silent aghastation at the latest nefariousness of its master. Turning boys into acorns! Malchor'd never done that before! In fact Papuga had never seen the magician turn anything into anything. Over the years the

bird had rather come to believe that Malchor's magicianship was more or less a bluff number. This present scene gave him furiously to pause.

Meanwhile the bird obeyed his master's orders and rode herd on his fellow prisoners, overseeing the hasty stuffing of numerous saddlebags which the captain and girls were obliged to haul down and out and hang over the neck and hump of the patient dromedary.

Malchor stood long (he was able to allow himself four and a half minutes) before the chained harp. "I still don't know the tune," he muttered, "and it would mean everything. To take or not to take: that is the question." Finally, "I'll take it!" he resolved, and called for tireless Tik-Tok, to whose back he strapped the not-all-that-enormous harp and commanded him to proceed with it aboard ship.

Captain Salt had gone on ahead. "The good ship Flollipop," Malchor had scorned in jesting mood.

"*The Crescent Moon*," corrected Salt, allowing himself a faint flare-up of indignation.

"Just so: the *Crescent Moon*. Will you oblige me by drawing it alongside the loading dock?" Malchor had heard about the ship's maneuverability by a single seaman. "Then stop there if you will and begin to trundle aboard the salt carts which you'll find ready-loaded at the pier." Yes, the captain had sometimes peered in pensive mood from a castle window and pondered the significance of the blue-piled conveyances.

"Papuga!" called the magician when the loaded dromedary had started down the trail, the two girls were struggling along under each her burden of rucksacks and valises, and Tik-Tok underneath the harp could be seen far away nearly at salt-flats level. "Oh, Papuga! where art thou?"

Silence.

"Ratted beast," swore the wizard. But time was lacking for a deep-going search. If they wanted to make that tide (needful at the high-lying pier adjacent to the salt-drying pans)... With a shrug of disgust Malchor turned the great iron

key three times in the front-door lock and scampered to catch up with the others.

Papuga, secure in an owl-cote (never otherwise occupied) in the tippy top of the Estic central tower, watched the *Crescent Moon* lift anchor and put out to sea. Then with a certain acorn secure in his beak the bird rose and flew away northeast toward the mainland for the second time in as many months.

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

“So you see,” finished up the parrot to his agog circle of listeners in the darkling—well, already completely dark—wood, “there was nothing for it but to make for the Forest of Acornwall, which I’d noticed when I flew this way earlier. If anybody could give help to a poor new-made acorn-head it had to be here.”

“And could they?” asked kind-hearted Polychrome solicitously.

“Let Mose tell you himself,” answered the parrot.

“Oh, yes,” squeaked the tiniest shrillest voice any of the new arrivals had ever heard; it was like hearing a large mosquito talk. “This is a pretty well organized place. It’s the wood of the living acorns—well, all acorns are sort of alive, I guess; they can grow into big oak trees. But these acorns are like tiny living heads just the way I was: they can see, hear, speak. But they can’t move—”

“You can move, me lad,” contradicted Siko Pompus. He’d seen that much before the light faded totally.

“Sure, we could all move about if only we had limbs,” agreed the boy, “but the Acornishmen don’t grow that way. Somebody way back must have noticed the fix these little talking heads were in—”

“It was the great wonder-worker Goorikop,” shrieked a few wee voices depending from nearby branches. “He fashioned the first living-twig bodies for us. Since then we’ve carried on the work ourselves.”

“There are little workshops placed here and there all through the woods,” Mose knew to continue. “The Acornishmen are busy all the time molding and shaping twigs and stalks cut live from the mother branches and fixing them to the acorn heads. The work is never-ending... because it’s just too terrible listening to the cries of the living heads that cover the forest floor: all of them terrified of being gobbled up live by the fierce wild swine.”

“Do the swine often make raids in the forest?” enquired the Scarecrow sympathetically.

“Oh, they never have yet, from all I hear. But just think—if they did...what carnage it would be...”

Our friends were somewhat relieved to know that the Acornishmen’s fears were largely imaginary. With that worry soothed, all who could soon settled to sleep upon the fallen mattress.

Polychrome and the leprechaun awoke ravenous. The latter sneaked off where none of his companions could see and nefariously attempted to ingest a plump acorn. If ‘swine’ could eat them and love it, why not an Irish elf who was used to all sorts? But the screams of the acorn-head as he popped it in his mouth and crunched down hard were too horrible. Also, the thick fluid and the pulp of the nut tasted too much like blood. Siko spat out the mouthful with shudders—and had therewith learned his lesson.

When he rejoined the others, the little stick figure that had once been Mose Maxton was holding forth in lively fashion. “We’ve got to do something: That is: if you’ll help. While I was lying under that chair I heard all about the awful enchanter’s plans. They’re sailing off somewhere in the *Crescent Moon*—”

“Have you any idea where?” put in kind Poly.

“I guess to Oz. Malchor didn’t exactly say but it seems likely. I know he’s up to no good, and he *was* impressed by Queen Ozma, what little he saw of her—” Here Mose omitted to remind them that he himself was the cause of the island magician’s seeing no more than he had of the mainland fairy ruler: a lack that Malchor might now be thinking of repairing. “We’ve got to head them off—if, as I say, you can help...?”

“How can we do that?” the Scarecrow wanted to know. “We’ve got no wheels”—even the casters of the bedstead being out of commission. He looked to Polychrome for affirmation.

“That’s right,” agreed the rainbow girl. “I climbed up for a look at first light. The bed is lodged on a tree-top and I don’t know how we can get it down.”

“What about up?” queried Siko Pompus.

Poly paused. “Oh, you mean sprinkle it with stardust to make

it ride?"

"Well, not just to make the shamrocks grow," grumbled the leprechaun.

"I tried," pursued Poly, pouting, "but the dust just falls on through the springs. And I didn't want to waste more of the bit I have left."

"I've got an idea," submitted the Scarecrow, who was fertile of such. "How about our walking on in the general direction until we come across something else we can all levitate on—courtesy of Poly's lifter-dust?"

The ever eavesdropping Acornishmen all around raised a helpful chorus of squawks: "We can lend you an oak limb, if that would do!"

But on consideration the travelers decided that sitting precariously astraddle a branch might be asking for disaster—while their mattress itself seemed a bit flimsy to be a flying machine on its own for four passengers (Papuga could do his own flying). On balance they agreed that footing it might be best, even if it did look like it was coming on to rain.

"But what about me vittles?!" complained Siko. "We missed lunch and supper and now breakfast times passin' and still no grub."

The acorn-neads chorused: "The next forest along is a maple grove. The elves there put up sugar and syrup—"

"Syrup for breakfast?" wondered the leprechaun. "With no pancakes to go under it?" He groaned.

"And on beyond there are nut groves," promised one Acornish elder who had traveled afield.

"That's more substantial," agreed the Irish elf. Even Papuga looked interested at the prospect of a tasty filbert or beechnut or two.

They started out.

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

Malchor was being testy. There had been a delay about some porters. Now the party all stood or lay about on the sands at the end of the Gulf (actually, a fjord) of Sorcery and kicked, perforce, their heels.

But let us go back.

Aboard the Crescent Moon the evil (? , or at least not particularly good) wizard had commanded the Captain to hoist full sail and make all the speedy haste he might. No point in dawdling about on the bounding main; anyway, the hitherto strictly landbound magician discovered he suffered from *mal de mer*. Twenty-four hours and they were cruising the length of the long inlet whose inmost beachworthy site was the nearest point to inland Oz of any indentations on the whole coastline of the continent of Sempernumquam.

The best part of another day and then all the loaded salt-carts had been carefully off-freighted and Malchor deemed his party ready to set out. Meanwhile an eye had been kept out for the appearance of natives. Malchor's own private opinion was that this inmost point of the long narrow bay should be the obvious location for a harbor town. Yet, far from a town they had yet to catch sight of even a single wandering herdsman. What the enchanter had not been able to visualize from his intense study of the maps and manuals in Cap's Salt's chart-room was that the landing place he had chosen gave on a rocky barren strip of land not much different from the desert that lay between it and Oz. There simply wasn't anything to support a local economy.

"What are we going to do?" rasped the annoyed magician. Nobody vouchsafed a reply. This wasn't *their* show. Let Malchor stew in his own juice as this coast appeared to offer no other juice.

He was at last driven to confide in the Doubtful Dromedary. "My ancient friend," he went and wheedled. (They'd never even been formally introduced, let alone been friends.) "You I know I

can trust." (How did he know that?) "Failing the appearance of any humans—" Malchor pronounced this word with great and newfound contempt. "...I do beseech your grace to make a sally about these lands and see if you can find any members of *your* race who might aid us in this doubtful shock of harms."

The dromedary looked doubtful.

"Oh, come on," urged the wizard. "For old times' sake?"

'What old times would those be?' wondered the big animal privately but said nothing. Warily it seesawed to its feet and made off leisurely across the wastes without a backward glance.

While they waited our travelers partied. They went back aboard the *Crescent Moon* and had a feast from among the captain's provisions. Heaven knew when they would have the chance of a big feed again. Those wastes to the west didn't look promising. Malchor tried to get them to sprinkle the blue salt on everything but the partying party, alerted by Beenie, weren't having any. Also, for the first time in weeks, they needn't eat chilé peppers, radishes, onions, and garlic, or drink the ubiquitous fire-water. Of comestibles, the wizard had been content merely to be sure his wagon-loads of salt got stowed aboard.

At the seventeenth hour Djebbel the Dromedary returned, leading (rather proudly) a procession of eight fresh dromedaries and six Bactrian camels. Our crowd flocked to meet them. Now there only remained to attach the salt carts and they'd be away on what it had gradually been borne in upon the travelers was to be a vending tour across Oz. But how attack?!

Captain Salt had definitely declined to haul down his rigging and sacrifice it to the cause of Malchor's mixed-up notions of vainglory (or whatever it was that was driving him; hard to tell). There were spare coils of rope in the hold and these could be expended, though they were found ultimately to serve to bind only nine of the carts well and truly to the girthings of a matching number of camels.

Then Tik-Tok (TIK-TOK) thought a thing. 'Cour-age!' he cried. "There's al-ways hope. We want a long-ish piece of rope, but since there is-n't an-y bring some of those tall reeds grow-

ing in the mud flats.”

That’s right: all the company had taken note of such vegetation when spying about for anything vegetable and edible. Date or coconut palms proved there none and those flourishing canes were not even sugar. But if they could be made to play another useful role...?

They could. Practical Tik-Tok showed how, with the aid of the captain’s machetes, the reeds could be harvested, stripped into long tough fibres, and braided into very serviceable rope-like cords. Why, it only took them a day or two. And then the caravan set out.

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

The erstwhile bedstead-aeronauts, now miserably earth-bound, had heard rain predicted by the Acornishmen and seen it coming. The oak people had not gone on to say it was the beginning of the Munchkin monsoon season. I suppose they thought the Scarecrow, by his costume visibly a Munchkin, would know. Yet the otherwise much-traveled ex-monarch had never been in just this far corner of the fabulous land, whereas the monsoon affected only far-eastern Quadlinga and the south-east quadrant of Munchkinland. Nor was the steady-rain season of long duration. But it was *now*.

At first Polychrome had been delighted. ‘Aha, rain,’ she thought. ‘Thank you, Daddy. Now there’ll be a rainbow soon and we can make tracks out of here...’ But as day followed wet day and no blue skies (or the chance of sun through mist) appeared, she fell to crooning forlornly “Blue Rain,” just as she had done on another melancholy occasion years before in Gardenia.[§] She also sang plain “Rain” (“Rain—falling from the skies—like lonely tears from misty eyes..”), and later lapsed into:

“There ought to be a rainbow somewhere

‘Cause it’s raining while there’s sun.

There ought to be a rainbow somewhere... But there’s none.

Clouds are flying, sunshine sparkles,

Rain descends in just one spot,

While tears splash my face at losing... All I’ve got.

There ought to be a happy ending.

There ought to be a dream come true.

But the only happy ending is

Is for you:

You’re leaving with your lover, laughing.

Rain falls while the sun shines hot.

That ought to make a rainbow somewhere...

It does not.”

§ See CHARMED GARDENS OF OZ: Editor’s note.

The lyric didn't exactly fit the Rainbow's daughter's situation but never mind.

Nothing helped. The girl stared disconsolately out into the falling blue from under the eaves of a maple-boiling shed where the party had sought refuge. Imagine: Polychrome the rainbow fairy being inconvenienced by rain: yet without that magical stairway to the stars—or at least to a comfortable cloud bank, the maiden was pretty powerless.

Still, all bad things come to an end, even if by then you're worn out with waiting. On the eighth day a magnificent bow let down its foot and the famished adventurers, more dead than alive through failure to feed, staggered toward it.

Polychrome's sisters were looking down, anxious to welcome back their sibling who had seldom been so long from home before. When they saw how haggard the party looked, Arcenciel and Pluvia rushed to assist Poly aloft, Regenvlaag and Lucy supported the Scarecrow, while all three of Arcobaleno, Opal, and Prism were needed to help up the diminutive leprechaun who even in his emaciated condition remained the heaviest of the lot. Papuga, designed by nature to be more self-sufficient than mere humans or pseudo-humans, was not hungry. He'd foraged nicely for himself among seeds and insects in the various woodlands through which the party had passed. As for stick-figure, acorn-headed Mose, he was lively as a cricket. His present gestalt required no feeding.

When the party were safely within a salon of Father Rainbow's cloud castle and seated about a big low dining board (the rainbow-master could come up with real viands when occasion demanded), Miss Polychrome addressed her dad: "We really blew it, father dear. We're in worse trouble than ever now and no nearer our goal. Would you mind if we all rest up here a few days? and then pretty please—could you put down the rainbow near wherever my friends' lost friends have got to? We've turned out to be just no use at all at going to anybody's rescue."

Old man Rainbow pondered a while and then agreed. "With the normal pot of gold underneath?" he asked.

Poly shrugged and the Scarecrow's eyes looked lackluster. Any mention of money just bored those two. But the leprechaun, as expectable, was all agog at the prospect. *He* knew awful places where gold worked wonders and was accordingly highly prized. If he played his cards right he'd soon be up to his knees in pepper-cheeses, he could foresee.

It was four days later that Father Rainbow, who in the meantime had provided rainbows in Rwanda (frightful scenes of carnage there), Ruthenia, and Roanoke, summoned the Scarecrow to a window with an outlook from the cloud castle down upon a road near the Munchkin-Quadling border. "I believe," he stated, "you were hoping to find, among others, a dromedary? There's a nice selection of them there." He handed the straw man a telescope.

"By jingo!" cried Lawrence after a moment's adjustment of the instrument. "Not only Djebbel but Princess Dorothy Gale of Oz and Kansas, as large as life! And Captain Salt of the galleon *Crescent Moon* with her. And oh my: oh, my: Tik-Tok the Clockwork Man, as I live and breathe" (well, this last activity he didn't really).

c h a p t e r t w e n t y - f i v e

One thing: young Sabrina, thrown together with Princess Dorothy as she was, thrilled at the opportunity to become best friends, pro tem, with the Oz celebrity. It began really at the moment of the dreadful enchantment of her previous best friend, Mose. Beenie was inconsolable and Dorothy was so kind. The girls couldn't be parted during the trying days that followed, aboard ship and as part of the caravan. "I like you almost as much as Trot," confessed Dorothy at one point, "and already better than Betsy."

Beenie was overwhelmed. To be liked on a near-par with those goddesses in the Oz pantheon! "Oh, but Betsy's so nice," she pretended to protest. "I admired her a lot in *The Hungry Tiger of Oz*." However, she rather spoiled the effect of her modesty by going on to ask, "What about Fatty-Wiggins? How do I stack up there?"

"Fatty-Wiggins'?" puzzled Dot. "Oh, gosh, I'd almost forgotten about her. Fatty... was fun. But yes, I like you, Sabrina, as much as I did funny Miss 'Lard-Tub'."

"Is she still in Oz?" Beenie wanted to know, her curiosity quite piqued by now.

"Oh, didn't you know?" said Dorothy in surprise. "That's right: the story isn't published yet.[§] Well, let me tell you. It happened like this—" And away the two went, deep in girls' talk again.

They were riding in the first, and by now half empty, salt cart. Long and wearisome had been the haul across the barren plain of the south most tip of Ev. Never a traveler had the group met, let alone a settler, until they passed onto the desert of the Shifting Sands, and there it was only Bedouins.

Magician Malchor was set back in his plans to popularize the blue salt. "Salt?!" said a Bedouin chief. "Are you crazy? That would wreak havoc with our metabolism. We have to

§ See *Fatty Wiggins and the Caresso-Pigs in Oz*. Editor's note.

be covered in our djellabahs and tarbooshes from head to toe all the time—for protection against the constant sun, you know. We'd be sweating like Negroes in here if we ate *salt!* We can't have that. We eat no salt, are cool as cucumbers, and don't perspire a teacupful in a year."

This was all news to Malchor, whose researches had all been into quite other properties of (at least, his brand of) salt.

He had better luck when he got over the border into Oz. There all was fresh and fertile and populous, and the people, not seeing many strangers in that outlook of the country, welcomed every passer-by. They also were not above consuming the dread poison, sodium chloride—even if it was blue. But there was one thing about them that ourprised Malchor. They had never heard of money!

That was a setback and a half. The genius of the wizard's scheme had been two-pronged. He was going to gain mind control over people wherever he went, through the power of the blue adulterative he added to the natural sea salt, *and* at the same time he would make them pay (cash) for it. He would grow both rich and powerful in one single operation.

Red Quadlings gathered around the blue-filled carts and all was delighted wonderment and curiosity. Some extended moistened fingers to sample the condiment. "Fwooh! That's strong!" the people cried, almost regretting the causticity their tongues experienced.

"That's right," affirmed Malchor. "A little of it goes a long way. But take a lot. You'll want a lifetime's supply at least."

Homemakers retired to their cottages and then returned with buckets or dishpans, which they filled. But when it came settling-up time it's a question who was more surprised, the peddler or the peddlerees. "Pay?" they said. "Buy?" they said. "Money? What's that?"

Dorothy and Tik-Tok laughed up their sleeves. They'd deliberately not said anything, waiting to enjoy the enchanter's discomfiture at this revelation. They continued to listen while Malchor explained what purchase was and how it was done.

He knew all about it from his source books at Estic. He just hadn't happened to read the pertinent article in the Ozyclopedia perhaps because there wasn't one.

"Gold pieces?" said a buxom housewife. "I've got some of those. Wait a minute." She left her neighbors and came back presently with a little chamois bag full of something heavy. She dumped the contents upon the surface of the salt heap. It made a pretty pictures shiny gold against the blue. "Is this what you were on about?"

Malchor's eyes bugged. Gracious, it was almost, if not quite, beyond the dreams of Croesus. Who cared about putative gold pots to be materialized if only you could think of the right tune to play on a harp? when such riches as these were dumped in your cart by people who didn't know what gold was for.

At-least: the goodwife knew what gold pieces were useful for, only for her it hadn't worked out. "You see," she explained, "I was going to sew them for spangles all around the edge of a thick nice shawl I've got. It would have been ever so pretty. But I never could arrange to get holes drilled in the pieces. I'd need that for attaching them by, you see. As it is, they just take up room in the kitchen dresser. You take them." She began to gather the coins up, liberally intermingled with salt, and stuff them back in the bag. "I'll just take an extra bucket of salt in exchange."

Goodness. How marvelous. There must be gold all over in this crazy country to be had for the asking. But now how awful. Suppose you *had* a million gold pieces. You couldn't buy anything with them. Everything was given away free, it seemed. But how marvelous you didn't even need gold to be rich. You could just go around and ask for things and get them for nothing and pile up all you wanted. But no: how dreary: what was the good of stockpiling if you could get more of the same thing free whenever you needed it?

Right there a lot of the zip went out of Malchor's campaign. In Oz he could never be any richer than the poorest citizen there. Nor was he an esthete who loved gold just for its beauty. In disgust he gave his gold to some children the

caravan passed playing hopscotch in the street. They could use the pieces for counters.

He could still achieve his other goals though; to exercise tyranny over the minds of men. Thus it remained worthwhile to go on dishing out the salt along the highways and byways of Oz. Beenie and the captive celebrities were supposed to help in this. The threat of being promptly turned into a spittoon or a box of stale cornflakes withstrained any of the unwilling caravan members from going on strike. They didn't like it but they couldn't after all really notice any unusual or dangerous behavior among the people to whom the salt got distributed. Wasn't perhaps the insidious power of the condiment all in Malchor's mind? They were not to know how deleterious a substance salt by its very nature actually was. *That* secret had been kept most faithfully throughout the known world, and this despite the fact that the truth could be gleaned from any thoroughgoing medical text book.

Ozma was still in her fugue. Gee, she didn't know when she'd been in such a fugue before. She couldn't get over it. Someone had actually told her to "BUTT OUT!"

The Girl Ruler thought back over her long reign. Dear me, she realized, she'd been at it for nearly a century now—and in all that time nobody had said "Butt out." They'd tried turning her into glass grasshoppers and peach pits and so forth, and one time somebody—oh, that was Atmos, the air man—had kidnapped her away into the sky, but nobody had pronounced hurtful words about butting out. This was due in part to the fact that the phrase hadn't been used until fairly recently. Prior to that people had said "Get lost." But well-read and clever Ozma could figure out that "butt out" was the opposite of "butting in," and of course no one ever accused a friend of anything so gauche as butting in. Well, someone had now, then followed it up with an admonition to do the opposite.

The little queen sat on her throne and let fall a silent tear. Why, she thought her friends *liked* her turning up when least expected and rescuing them from whatever pickle they'd got into. And all without turning a hair or even a hint of a wet armpit. All she did was touch the Magic Belt.

'Mmh,' mused Ozma. 'Maybe it was all a bit *too* easy.' Now that she thought about it, perhaps it *could* seem rather flat, when characters had got themselves into a terrible bind, to have a dea ex machina step in and steam-roller everything into non-existence, rather than let the characters determine their own destiny through their own efforts.

Very well: (and she swore to herself she wasn't going to pout) just for now she was not going to go *near* the Magic Picture. She'd let her friends (and enemies?) on the Isle of Estic fend for themselves.

She reached to her notes lectern and picked up her appointments book. Let's see: what had Jellia marked down as must-do's?

Glinda had phoned. She's be glad to confer with the fairy ruler of All Oz concerning a matter of protocol in settling a dispute between two petty Quadling kings. That sounded dull.

The citizens of the Dainty China Country wanted their High-Queen to come hand out the trophies at a Christmas prize-giving at the local high school. Ozma yawned.

But what about this? Jellia Jamb, handmaiden in waiting and sometime secretary, had tucked between the pages of the appointment book an engraved embossed invitation!

"Queen Lurline of the Forest Realm of Burzee requests the distinct pleasure of the presence of Queen Ozma of Oz at the annual Fairy Dance Recital to be held in the said Forest of Burzee at noon promptly on 25 December h.a. — N. B. No prize-giving or protocol required."

Perhaps it was the p. s. that did it. Ozma simply longed to get away for a bit and just be herself. Maybe she'd go in disguise as a simple forest sprite. But no, the fairies would be expecting her to lend the allure of a visiting royal. But at least she wouldn't take a big entourage. Just Betsy and Trot; the close ones, she thought.

There'd have to be gifts taken, of course. What would be appropriate? The girl ruler considered the season. The recital date coincided with that of the real-world Christmas festival, she noted.

People ate turkeys on that date, she knew, but turkeys never had to lay their lives on the line in Oz, so they were out as a possible offering. But—oh, that's right: mince and pumpkin pies. Those last were very appropriate, given the Oz setting.

'Now, let's see: if the Sawhorse runs up to Jack's today—this is the twentieth—and Jack needs a while to harvest and bake... Sawks can be back with a load of fresh pies on Christmas Eve. Then the girls and I will dash on straight to Burzee. How exciting: a midnight journey. Maybe we'll run into Santa Claus.

You know? they did.

The old gentleman was lolling in his sleigh catching forty winks after his all-night odyssey, while the deer grazed, when

Princess Ozma and friends passed in the wake of the speeding Sawhorse. “Whoa!” cried Ozma and Sawks slithered to a stop in the pretty pink snow (special just for Christmas) on the foot-slopes of South Mountain.

Santa woke up with a big “Ho-ho-ho” (he’d received word that he had to say that all the time now; he hoped the fad would soon pass) and an expansive stretch. “Why, it’s young fairy Ozma!” he exclaimed (anyway, ‘young’ in comparison to himself). “Come on over here, you three girls.”

He leaned forward and out of the litter still cluttering his sleigh drew forth a big stone jug of Swedish glögg (guaranteed non-alcoholic but producing a nice glow even so). When the ladies were settled underneath the laprobes collapsible cups were passed round and soon the mood was merry as could be.

“We thought we were going to sort of miss Christmas this year,” confessed Marye Griffiths, whom we all know as ‘Trot’. “But this is Christmas and a half, celebrating it with Santa Claus himself!”

The fat old fellow purred and his eyes twinkled.

“Which one is Rudolph?” asked Betsy, gazing around at the reindeer, which wandered ad libitum, nibbling the fallen red Virginia creeper leaves and pink grass that poked out of the snow here and there. “None of them look very red-nosed.”

“Oh, I retired Rudy some time ago,” confided St. Nicholas, “when no one was looking. I had come to feel that that whole scene made Christmas seem too corny. It’s *pretty* corny as it is.”

“Do you think so?” mused Ozma, still in pensive mood from her recent ponderings. “Sometimes I’ve thought Christmas needed a bit of lightening up from what might otherwise be just a solemn festival reminding us of redeemers who get blamed for trying to help...”

Santa caught the melancholy note in the little fairy’s voice. “What is the trouble, dear? May I know?”

At such kindness Ozma gave a stifled sob—and then it all came out: her hurt feelings and her frustration, at wanting to assist her friends she was sure must be in trouble still, and not

being allowed to. The girls had heard it all before 'til it was running out their ears, in fact—but telling someone new might relieve their friend, so they sat quiet and listened again.

“This news is bad indeed,” agreed Santa Claus when the little queen’s tale has been told. “Malchor the Malcontent. I know him well. He was expelled to that island—oh, donkey’s years ago by the C.A.W.W.W. for just such doubtful dealings: suspicious use of thaumaturgicals, correspondence with known malefactors of magic, et cetera...

“If you like, my dear,” went on the genial Gentleman, “I could fly over Estic on my way home, invisibly, of course, and just make sure things haven’t got out of hand—at least, so far.”

“Oh, would you, Santa?” The fairy was much relieved. “That would ease my mind wonderfully.”

The little impromptu Christmas party broke up, to the tune of the “Cantique de Noël” sung beautifully by a choir of angels off-stage, and the participants went on their ways with much to think about.

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

The twenty-four pies were a great success. Even allowing for the myriads of fays which came from all over Sempernumquam and even from as far afield as British Columbia, there was a tiny wedge for each one and they declared to a woman that Jack Pumpkinhead had outdone himself in the manufacture of the toothsome delicacies. To a man too, for, besides Dreamsweet, Eenymynomo was there and he was heard to say to his friend Shimmerwings** that they didn't have better pumpkin confections anywhere on the Great Plains. Jack had got the combination of nutmeg and cardamom quite perfect. Ozma jotted a note of these compliments to relay to the amiable larrikin when next they should meet.

For now she was sitting in a leafy bower to one side of the splendid new wooden dance floor in the inmost glade of the Forest of Burzee. The girl ruler's party had arrived just at the crack of dawn: too early, in fact. The Lurlinian fairies in their usual flurried fashion weren't nearly finished with their preparations. Before she knew it, Ozma—and Trot and Betsy with her—was on her knees on the shiny-odoriferous hickory boards hammering in spikes.

She leaned back on her heels and with the crook of her wrist brushed aside, like Judy Garland, a non-existent lock. She gazed round at the glimmering zing trees that surrounded the stage and seating area and at the dainty figures of fairies that flitted ceaselessly to and fro. At first the Queen of Oz, remembering that she was meant to add royal glamor and gravitas to the occasion, had tried, with her companions, to stay out of the way of the busy Burzee sprites, but it was not long before she'd decided to let dignity go by the board.

The annual recital of the Lurline School of Dance was one of Fairyland's most prestigious cultural events. To appear on stage there was the pinnacle of what fairies who specialized in the dance might hope to achieve, and the recital itself compared

**See Helen Sandwell: *The Valley of Color Days*. Editor's note.

favorably with anything that fairy painting, music, literature, handicrafts, or architecture could show. Few were more mistresses of their art than Lurline's pupils of the dance.

This year the gifted troupe were not only to perform the usual classical repertoire but intended to include a suite of tap dances. It was this that the Oz queen at present waited, in quite a little glow of anticipation, to witness. Now the fiddles tuned up and from somewhere the thrilling chords of a harp joined in. Then a honkytonk piano joined the delightful din and they were away on the "Qwertyuiop" or Typewriter Dance. Six fairy feet flew and the clatter was so infectious you felt you wanted to join in. Ozma found herself distinctly toe-tapping.

The applause was terrific. Fairies hanging in the trees roundabout nearly fell out because they *would* use both hands to clap with and forgot to hang onto their perches.

One would have expected that to be the climax of the occasion. But what was this? Queen Lurline herself was making her way from behind the scenes where she had labored frenetically as mistress of the robes, metteuse-en-scene, and 'keeper of the beat'. She stepped negligently over heaps of fays sprawled here and there, clutched a dope-stick in each hand (raspberry- and mandrake-flavored), and came toward Ozma, who was still rapping her fan on the seat-back in front of her.

"My dear," Lurline exclaimed. "So you turned up after all? How did I miss you? Well, I *have* been in the office all morning—and then back-stage. How did it go, think you? Oh, jolly good. I don't know. I've had to practically take switches to these witches to get them to practise. Eleanor there is pretty good but she's no Eleanor Powell. As for Moonbeam and Swansdown, they're no better than they should be—choreographically speaking, that is. But I was wondering: what if we really thrilled the tutus off this lot? Could you—but I know you 'could'—*would* you think of executing a number yourself? The crowd would go mad—"

"Me?" shrieked Princess Ozma—all very ladylike, of

course. "I haven't used *mes pieds* for tripping any fantastics since I ascended the throne an eon ago. How did your highness happen on a droll thought like that?"

"What if I begged you very prettily?" persisted Lurline and took a deep drag on the raspberry. "I said I knew you *could*. Don't forget the old song—" Here the fairy queen halfcroaked in her Tallulah Bankhead voice: "Fish gotta swim. Birds gotta fly. Fairies must dance... A lot or they'll die..."

"Well, we don't exactly die, of course. And since you're half fairy—if not two thirds—"

Ozma felt herself yielding. It *was* nice to be asked. "I did use to do a mean buck-and-wing when I was a mere boy," she admitted, "—to Mombi's old phonograph—" Here she began to hum "—and the Band Played On."

"So it's agreed," summed up Lurline with satisfaction. "I'll alert the ensemble.. You wouldn't have your music with you?"

The half-fairy princess bridled. "I told you: I hadn't the least intention—"

"Never mind. The harpist has been pleading to perform a lyric jazz number. Do you think that would serve?"

"I'll come up with something," promised the Girl Ruler.

"Wasn't it fun!" enthusiasticized Betsy Bobbin as the red wagon pounded over the cobbles again on Boxing Day. "I can't get that harp tune out of my mind." She kept time to her inner melody on the wooden ledge in front of her.

But Trot was pensive. Trot was often rather pensive. "I keep wondering if you did the right thing, your majesty," she confessed shyly to the confessedly very refreshed Oz queen beside her.

Ozma turned to face her chum, registering considerable surprise. "Do you think I compromised my dignity by doing that Charleston?" she asked uncertainly.

"Oh, it wasn't *that*," Trot exclaimed hastily.

"But then, whatever do you mean?"

"I keep thinking about the little Scarecrow girl and her/his/its friend. I wonder if you're just quite sure you did the

right thing in leaving them with that icky old wizard or whatever he was.”

Ozma pureed her lips in disapproval. “‘Its friend’, as worshipfully you term him, was the one who suggested, not all that politely, that I quit the Isle of Estic. I determined then I wouldn’t bother the bunch if they were so sure they could cope on their own.”

“Not ‘they’,” solemn Trot ventured to contradict. “Just he—and I wonder really whether he wasn’t pretty remorseful when he saw what he’d done.”

Ozma was struck all a-pause. “You’re perfectly right, Trot dear. I’ve been a vain proud creature, nursing a grudge—”

“Darling Princess,” murmured Trot in turn. “You’re wonderful. I *would* feel so much better if I knew for sure the girls—and the others—were all right.”

Ozma squeezed her friend’s hand. “Put your mind at rest, dearest. We’ll look at the Magic Picture as soon as we get home.”

“If you can make it snappy, Poly my child,” said old Father Rainbow, “I’ll keep the bow on hold for a bit, if for any reason you or your friends want to beat a hasty retreat.”

“Oh, thanks, Dad. You’re a pal. But I can’t help but think everything will be all right. After all, we don’t mean anybody any harm.”

Polychrome, being the essence of refracted light, tended to look on the bright side. The others were more dubious. The tales Mose told of incarceration on the Isle of Estic and of a most peculiar diet had made them hardly know what to expect. Papuga and the little acorn boy could count on a tongue-lashing at the very least if they rejoined the wandering wizard Malchor.

Still, nothing for it. Daddy Rainbow unfurled the colors and tossed them down in the courtyard of the palace of King Pon and Queen Gloria[§], outside which palace the dromedary caravan had drawn up. Quite a little crowd was gathered about the landing before the doors leading into the royal apartments from the courtyard. It looked like someone was making a speech.

Siko Pompus the leprechaun was the first to scramble down. He knew what was to be expected at the foot of rainbows. Sure enough, there he spied a gallon-size crockery pot and something glittering within its open top. He rushed to fall on his knees and embrace the crock. Then he looked about, affrighted. He had every reason to think to see at any moment the magician Malchor, whose devotion to gold matching his own he’d heard so much about. Then gradually he relaxed his hold...

Nobody else was paying any attention to the goldpot. All his traveling companions were moving as if mesmerized across the flag-stones toward the tribune. Nor, apparently, had any other of the spectators there, caught up as they were in the speechifying that was going on, noticed the soundless descent of the rainbow-end and the hardly louder arrival on earth of its passengers.

§ See *The Scarecrow of Oz*. Editor’s note.

A voice was singing out loud and clear. "I, the grand and miraculous Scarecrow of Oz, quondam Ruler of the Emerald City and currently, in the view of many, King of both the Munchkin Country and of all Oz, if not Emperor of Sempernumquam entire, herewith make and decree that all of you here assembled must sign the documents I am sending round, testifying that you are witnesses and loyal supporters of the measures therein enumerated—"

"Good heavens, it's yourself," whispered Polychrome, nonplussed, to Lawrence Scarecrow.

"Shh, Poly dear," returned the Scarecrow in a scarcely audible rustle. "Let's hear what I've got to say."

"The proclamation stipulates," continued Beenie (you'd guessed that), "that proceedings have now reached that stage where I deem it wise to deliver over to my great and good friend, the sage enchanter Malchor of Estic, full and complete powers to act for me in any decisions which perforce must be taken at such times as I myself might be absent, or in the event that I should be personally incapacitated. The measure shall be in force with immediate effectiveness.

"Furthermore, we the Scarecrow do hereby ordain that any who should see fit to question our authority in this matter or that of our well-beloved Lieutenant, the said Malchor, may be taken up and held without bail or bond in the imperial prisons for as long as it shall please us to prolong the restraint, the charge to be intended subversion and the pain to be eventual transportation to the salt pans of Estic, there to remain at our pleasure."

Her oration finished, Scarebee looked around her: rather diffidently, considering the assured manner of her recent remarks. There were hardly any cheers. What there were came from the people on the platform with her. These were observed to be composed of either flesh or copper, and there were in fact only three of them. The but now so signally celebrated wizard Malchor was nowhere to be seen.

The other Scarecrow, the Rainbow's daughter Polychrome (carrying carefully a little stickfigure), and the Irishman Siko

Pompus strolled leisurely forward.

What young Sabrina Amerul had been looking forward to with a thrill for months now struck her with horror. When she raised her glance from the feebly cheering persons about her and caught sight of the approaching group of newcomers, she wanted the platform to open and swallow her whole.

How ghastly. Just precisely at the moment when she should happen to be reciting that awful lying spiel old Malchor had forced her to memorize, the person she was traducing *would* have to appear: How particularly vile. Now everything was ruined. Far better never to have come to Oz at all than to have it turn out like this.

Beenie looked around for a hole to flee into. But, beautifully, a diversion occurred. The spotlight had switched from her and was directed to Princess Dorothy, who with a scream of delight jumped down the six steps to the ground and rushed to fling herself into the arms of the genuine and beaming Scarecrow. Everyone else looked on admiringly as the two ancient Oz friends cuddled and took on as if it were the Second Coming.

Then, like Melanie in the famous scene of welcome to the rueful Scarlett at Ashley's birthday party[§], Dorothy turned, saying, "Now, Scarekera dear, I want you to meet a new friend of mine. This little girl is very clever at doing take-offs of your very own self!"

The (original) Scarecrow looked droll. "I think I noticed something of the sort just now," he reported. Then he did his own Melanie by stepping to Scarecrow Number Two and giving her a rustly hug.

Well! Poor Beenie didn't know what to do. Of course it was wonderful to be forgiven without any ado but she had a very sharp sense of not deserving it. On the other hand, neither had she deserved to be thrust into the painful position in the first place. Her motivations in first donning the Scarecrow costume had been purely altruistic. Oh, it was all so unfair and hurtful.

§ See the film of *Gone with the Wind*. Ed's note.

However, her confusion was covered by all the rejoicing around her as Princess Dot, Captain Salt, and Tik-Tok were reunited with Polychrome, the Scarecrow, and Mose, as well as Papuga and the leprechaun Siko Pompus (still holding to him pretty tight his new-acquired crock of gold). The palace servants and townspeople who had made up the audience were much edified by this extra show that had been thrown in. But the exercise of enthusiasm calmed down and there was rather an awkward pause. "Where is—er, Malchor?" the Scarecrow ventured to enquire.

"Ughh—" Everybody groaned. Then grudgingly Cap'n Salt vouchsafed: "He's inside—with the king and queen. Trying to talk them into joining his 'movement', as he calls it."

"Not 'takeover bid'?" asked the Scarecrow. "I thought I understood from what my other self was saying as we dropped in—"

Dorothy broke in to explain. "Malchor's funny that way. He keeps trying one scheme after another. When he didn't make out trying to sell his salt—"

"Salt?" breathed Polychrome. "Oh, such bad taste."

"Bad taste doesn't stop Malchor," Dorothy went on. "In fact I'd say that's almost the 'genius' of whatever he does. Anyway, when nobody knew what 'to buy' meant, Malchor started giving the stuff away. But at the same time as he's negotiating with the royals indoors for peaceful collaboration he has us out here trying to rouse the rabble, just in case it turns out that a revolution should be what plays best."

"Sounds like quite an interestin' guy," put in Siko Pompus. The mention of 'buying' and 'selling' didn't put *him* off. But then the leprechaun was distinctly peasant-class where he came from.

"I hope it won't be a takeover bid," submitted the Scarecrow. "I dislike attempts to conquer Oz."

"They are so bor-ing, aren't they?" chimed in Tik-Tok. "I can nev-er wait 'til they're o-ver."

"Yes!" Dorothy looked indignant. "Think how many Oz stories have been spoiled by somebody tediously marching on the

Emerald City—if not kidnapping it whole.”

“But,” another and tiny voice, almost like a mosquito’s, chimed in, “it says in the *GOGTRAA* that every Oz adventure has to end with foiling a takeover plot. It’s just not vintage Oz lore otherwise.”

“I’m afraid we’re going to have to disappoint ourselves this time then,” said the Scarecrow apologetically. “I’m going to be very tempted to ‘take my dolls and go home’ if I notice any conquests trying to take place.”

Secretly everyone breathed a sign of relief.

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

"I know you!" exclaimed magician Malchor. Whimsically he began to hum:

"I'd know you anywhere.

I'd know that grin.

I'd know you anywhere

When you walked in—

"You're the celebrated Leprechaun Siko Pompus."

"Sure, and how'd yur honor be afther knowin' that'?" asked the elf. As a matter of fact he *was* grinning.

"I have my contacts," confided Malchor. "Though the GAWWW condemned me to near-solitary exile, it didn't stop them coming to pay me a visit now and then. Actually, I think secretly they admired my spirit: refusing to give up thaumaturgy, you know."

"The GAWWW," repeated Siko thoughtfully; "that would be the Grand Avenue White-Wash Works? I know them well. Whenever I'm in Milwaukee."

"You make a mistake," the wizard returned. "The GAWWW—"

"Don't tell me. I know: The Gallant Army of World War Widows. The ladies have asked me—"

"Be silent: I shall inform you—"

"The Georgia and Western Weather Watchers: I send them regular reports. I knew third time would be the charm," the leprechaun chortled with satisfaction.

"The Global Association of Wizards, Witches and Warlocks," intoned Malchor with emphasis, "—or GAWWW is unique." He settled back in his chair and prepared to lecture, a thing he was never averse to. "Established in 1770, the Association's main purpose has been to confront and control mischievous doings of deviating members. I spoke of the group's uniqueness. This consists partly in the circumstance that the Association's total membership has shrunk in every accounting since 1790. But as size of the body had diminished the strength of surviving mem-

bers has been concentrated. The tools and resources of expelled members have fallen to those who remained. By now a sextet of leading adepts find themselves lords over just incredible power. The great wizard Taliesin—

“I’ve heard of him!” exclaimed Siko.

“And *he knows you*,” pronounced Malchor severely. He continued: “Taliesin hails from beyond the mysterious northern isles of mist. His particular interest is in the magical properties of arcane instruments of music. He has it in his power to possess himself of any lyre, theorbo, or clavichord that takes his fancy—”

“Most likely *he* stole me harp,” muttered Siko Pompus. “I wouldn’t put it past him.”

“How did you ever guess?” marveled Malchor, abandoning his lecture. “That’s how I found out about you. Taliesin dropped in for his semi-annual visit some time ago and left a calling card. Come.”

Here the magician stepped to a closet and threw wide a door. “What do you think about that?”

The elf was so taken aback he dropped his pot of gold, from which he hadn’t been separated for an instant since he had found it in the courtyard at rainbow’s end. Gold-pieces rolled everywhere. “Me harp!” shrilled Pompus and once more threw himself down to caress an inanimate—or mostly so—object.

“Are you pleased?” asked Malchor.

“Well, rarther!” the leprechaun exclaimed, all amid his sobs of delight. “But however did me darlin’ harp get here?”

“I brought it.”

“Yes, I can figure *that* out,” said the elf impatiently. “What I mean is: where did you get hold of it? It was stolen from me just a little bit south of North Carolina—and that’s a long ways from your island of Estic.”

“I told you of Taliesin’s coming-to-visit gift the last time he dropped by..?”

“Of all the nerve!” cried the leprechaun in a fury. “The ol’ creep steals it from me, breakin’ me heart, and then offloads it

on you like it were nothin'. I don't get it."

"He didn't get it either," related the magician. "That was the trouble. He'd run the instrument through every sort of assay—away there in his laboratories on the misty isles—but he hadn't been able to figure out what properties the harp had—if it ever had any. As for producing gold-pots, he could never deduce which was the right tune—"

Here the red-bearded little Irishman burst into high peals of merriment. "Hoo hah! that's a good one!" he wheezed amid tears of laughter. "So he heard me after all and fell for the bait!"

"What bait would that be?" asked Malchor coldly.

"Tryin' an' all to stop the mean black thief—be he ever so shrouded in impressive robes—I yelled after him that the harp wouldn't do him no good 'cause he nivver knew the tune that materialized the crock o' gold."

"And which tune was that?"

"'Twere nivver a tune at all: D'you think, in the pinch, when I had to choose between the single gold-pot I'd latched onto and me dear ol' harp that could produce pots of gold at random at the touch of a tune, I'd 'a' chosen the former? Nivver a bit of it: This harp can no more manufacture gold than I can meself—"

Malchor went wild. To think of the weeks if not months he'd lost playing through every Irish melody in the book, and Spanish and calypso ones to boot—and all for a non-existent chimera. He flew at the leprechaun to brain him.

But Siko Pompus was no fool. He yanked the harp from the cupboard, dropped to a stool, and swept a magic arpeggio from the silver strings. Malchor stopped in his tracks.

The arpeggio cantered back down the scale into the melody of "I am of Ireland"^s—and the bad magician began quietly, enjoyably, to weep. Siko allowed but a moment to pass to let the last triad sink in. Then he played all the best tunes in the world: "Danny Boy" (with its wonderful octave leap), "Fascination", "Im Chambre séparée", "Stella by starlight", "Spanish eyes",

§ See CHARMED GARDENS OF OZ again. Ed's note.

“Mem’ries”, “Heaven drops her curtain dawn”, “Yesterday”, and ending up with Ravel’s plaintive “Pavane”.

Malchor was all dissolved. “Nuts,” he said quietly.

““Nu-uts’?!” echoed the leprechaun. He had thought he was going to get more of an applause than that.

“Let’s get out of here,” said Malchor.

“Whu—where?” stuttered Siko all surprised.

“If you can play like that—and you’re crazy about gold—whereas I’ve gone off it completely... I can keep you in all the gold you’ll ever want, the way these fools trot it out in exchange for salt. As for taking over Oz, either mentally or physically: who needs it? Nobody likes me. My magic has produced zilch so far. Let’s hit the road, I spinning gold, you playing...”

“Malchor,” said the leprechaun Siko Pompus, “I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.”

The gang were all gathered on the formal stairway on the other side of the palace. Such leavetaking as there was to be—and it wasn't all that sentimental—cordial had already taken place. Headed by King Pon and Queen Gloria, the group had handkerchiefs at the ready. Now they waved them. The camel caravan, minus the Doubtful Dromedary, moved off. And that was that.

"You'll be wanting to take your own departure," spoke King Pon. It wasn't a question, or a hint; just a statement.

"That's right, your grace," replied the Scarecrow, who had slipped into his natural role as leader of the combined 'rump' caravan party and erstwhile rainbow travelers. "We must be getting on. Thank goodness, there's no great urgency about our travel. We can take our time and enjoy it. But we do want to get together with the great ones in the Emerald City and see about getting young Mose disenchanting."

Mose was of course in the careful charge of Beenie Amerul. For a little while the girl had her own 'living doll', grotesque as the form of the poppet was, and she meant to discharge her custodianship creditably. She herself, naturally, had shed, albeit with many a sigh and secret tear, her mockery costume of "the second Scarecrow" and now appeared as a simple Quadling maiden.

As for the continuously live and kickin' Flanders Scarecrow, he/it hung on a coathanger (royal, velvet, and monogrammed) and was an honored and full-fledged member of the company. Many a fascinating conversation would the 'true' Scarecrow have with his other self in the days to come.

Polychrome would stay with the party only until they encountered their first rainbow. She had no fish to fry in the capital and felt she ought to be attending to her rainbovial duties for a time now after a month or more of being so often from home.

Traveling by easy stages the strollers had just come in sight of the town of Fuddlecumjig when a cloud of dust was seen, a

clatter and bang of hoofs and wheels were heard, and the celebrated Red Wagon, Sawhorse-impelled, with Jack Pumpkinhead at the reins, ran up to a smart halt amid a spray of gravel.

“Her Highness wanted you to enter the city in style,” announced the genial pumpkin-headed fellow. “She’s been observing you for a long time in the Picture. Very relieved, of course, at the way things turned out for you. However, there are aspects of the situation that still require clarification—” Obviously this was not the amiable larrikin’s own vocabulary but rather something that Queen Ozma—or someone had trained him to say.

The party needed no wordy explanations. Looking forward to give their feet a break, six and a half of them climbed aboard. That would be Dorothy, Tik-Tok, Captain Salt, the Scarecrow and his other self, Sabrina, and Mose. Djebbel the dromedary elected to continue after all on foot. As for the parrot Papuga: in the end and in view of already perceived changes in the personality and hopably the behavior of his master, he had opted to remain as an appendage to the new-formed “beautiful friendship” of the island savant. At this moment he would in all likelihood be squawking and/or fluttering somewhere south of Mount Munch.

What a thrill for Sabrina A. (now considerably restored in spirits by the pleasant and so unexpected turn affairs had taken to climb into a seat in the veritable fabulous *red wagon!* Twiggy Mose was less thoroughly thrilled, having read only one Oz book (*Pirates; that and Captain Salt in Oz* had naturally formed part of the old mariner’s tiny library aboard the *Crescent Moon*), but he didn’t *mind*. To the others it was old stuff but certainly highly gratifying for all that.

The captain was allowed to take the reins. Though seldom ashore he was nevertheless an able hand with a four-in-hand when occasion required. This freed Jack P. to turn to the group and clue them in on developments at the Palace of Magic.

“As I said, Princess Ozma has been looking in on you every day for quite some time. Also I hear she’s been having heavy

BEENIE IN OZ

conferences with the Wizard—" Here it was understood by all that the worthy O.Z. Diggs, the original Wonderful Wizard of Oz, was intended (not some inept adept from the isle of Estic). "I don't know what it's about. Ozma's been looking rather solemn though."

This sounded like a mystery: something to give an extra edge of excitement, even anxiety, to the prospect of soon encountering the habitués of the royal court of Oz.

“Steady there, girls,” cautioned Princess Ozma. Betsy, Trot, and Scraps the Patchwork Girl had tagged along as the girl ruler made her daily call in the Wizard’s laboratory. Betsy *still* couldn’t get that catchy tune from the Fairy Dance Recital out of her mind—and it had been weeks now. She’d caught Trot round the waist and was pirouetting her about the big but cluttered work room. Scraps, who would dance at the drop—or, for that matter, on the head—of a pin, was executing a stately gavotte of her own. They all simmered down at their chum’s hint.

“How goes it, Oz?” spoke the little half-fairy. “Nearly ready?”

The old savant was oblivious to any light fantastics going on around him. Scraps, if she’d given a thought to it, might have been reminded of the conjurer Dr. Pipt stirring pots with all four extremities, the way O.Z. Diggs watched over crucibles and tended test tubes, while a most formidable and many-colored reek ascended to the ceiling from a dozen sources.

“Pyew,” said Betsy. “What *is* that?” The girls hadn’t been allowed into the laboratory before, but now that, as Ozma knew, the experiments were so far forward...

“It’s not the most flower-like, is it?” agreed the technician. “I myself find it strange that nature should make *all* of these minerals so necessary for animal well-being so uniformly bad-smelling—and—tasting.” He paused a moment. “Want to sample?”

The girls approached the specimens table with wrinkled noses. They didn’t look at all certain they wanted to sample. Oz had already said it tasted bad so what was the percentage? However, plucky Betsy essayed to sacrifice herself in the name of science. The Wizard handed her a wooden spoon with a dab of cooled mixture on the end of it.

“Faw!” gagged Betsy and spat it out. ““What ever *is* that?” she reiterated.

“Pretty terrible, isn’t it?” agreed Diggs complacently. “And yet it’s absolutely marvelous for you. If you’d swallowed it you would have got into you all the potassium, ascorbic acid, cal-

cium, selenium, iron, magnesium, and vitamin E you need for a whole day. I call it ‘pacsime’: an acronym, you know.”

“But, Professor,” Trot called him honorifically, “if it tastes so bad how could it be good for one?”

“I’m afraid taste is a very poor guide, at least for humans, as to what one ought to ingest. Depending on mere taste, many children—adults too—might live on a steady diet of chocolate bars. Or the grown-ups might choose coffee or liquor or tobacco. And all the while poor-tasting, or no-tasting, potassium, vitamin E, and the rest could be doing wonders for us. It’s strange.”

“What about—” Here the Patchwork Girl turned a somer-
“Salt!?”

“Dreadful!” exclaimed the Wizard. “But I’m glad you brought it up. In fact, it’s what this whole exercise is about. Our dear Princess here became aware, through her daily attention to the Magic Picture, that an unnatural... ‘enrichment’, shall we say? of the popular diet by salt was taking place in a certain part of Oz. At first she was concerned that an actual display of force was going to be necessary to put a stop to the practice, but fortunately that threat seems to have blown over. Still, someone’s going to have to go round in the wake of the abuse and mop up, as it were. My present decoction, dried in the form of tablets, is supposed to do the trick.”

“Is salt so bad for you?” asked Trot. “I’m so fond of potato chips and popcorn—”

“Not to mention *my* favorites,” put in Betsy, and proceeded to recite a whole litany: “Dill pickles, salted nuts, anchovies, bacon, sardines, pretzels, smoked mackerel, fried ham, sauerkraut, licorice, saltines, and strong cheeses.”

Ozma shuddered delicately. “I know,” she sighed. “I’ve been trying these last weeks to lead you away from the fell substance by instructing chef Etam Upp to include plenty of herbs and spices in our meals but *no* salt.”

“Gosh,” marveled Betsy. “That super chilé con carne we had last night. You mean there was no salt in that?”

“Nary a smidgin,” replied Ozma colloquially. “And there you

see you've answered your own possible objection. It isn't by any means necessary to include salt in order for a dish to be flavorful and delicious."

"But, Ozma," pursued Trot. "Why *is* salt so bad? Here in Oz at least, we can't be killed by, or die as a result of, anything, so how could salt harm us?"

"That's quite right, Trot: we can't die. But there's nothing stopping us from having symptoms. Do you ever have a headache?"

"You know I do!" replied the California girl with spirit. "How often I've come to you for an aspirin."

"Actually aspirin's quite good for one," Ozma put in as a footnote, "—in extreme moderation. But people who never take salt never get headaches. Never."

Everybody marveled.

"And then dizzy spells, swollen ankles, sensitive teeth, ringing in the ears, stomach aches, palpitations, or face-flushing. Anyone for those?"

"Why, we all have all of them—regularly," declared Betsy almost indignantly. "What's to stop us?"

"Saltlessness."

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

When the gaggle of girls got downstairs again they had a surprise waiting for them. Ozma had not checked the Magic Picture since breakfast nor realized what good time the truants from southeast Quadlinga were making. There they all were, in the State Reception Room, and Jellia Jamb making them comfortable, when the group from the Wizard's laboratory walked in.

Thus casual was the achievement of Sabrina Amerul's goal of goals: to be presented at the Court of Oz. Queen Ozma was so kind and so condescending. She went round giving each one her hand: in the case of Princess Dorothy, an actual hug, and, out the window, to the forefoot of the Doubtful Dromedary, who said "Hmfff", much gratified. When she came to the trembling Beenie she said, "So this is the little lady who caused this great—well, not 'war' exactly—" Here she broke off quoting Abraham Lincoln. "Say rather 'commotion'. I'm very pleased it all seems to have resolved itself all right—or nearly so."

Breenie just bumbled something incoherent while the little queen's attention passed to the curious acorn-headed stick figure in the little girl's embrace. "And if I don't mistake me greatly this little person and I have also met before." here Ozma touched her Magic Belt, which she never stayed at home without.

Mose Maxton appeared in his normal shape, clothed and in his right mind. He dropped to one knee and inclined his head. He'd learned his lesson.

Ozma placed a kind hand on that head and said, "Arise, my young friend. I shall never more remember our former hatred, so thrive I and mine."

The Girl Ruler even chanced to recall that her own creation and favorite, the remarkable sawhorse of Oz, had played no inconsiderable part in the adventure just completed. She went outside and said Hello to him. It was such a fine day—

and so early yet. Ozma was almost tempted to ride off madly on Sawks and tidy up on her own that loose end that still dangled in the vicinity of Mount Munch. However, she thought better of it.

No, the new arrivals must have a proper reception, with cake and oz-cream and the lot, and made to feel properly welcome. The little Queen went back inside to her retinue and then led the way to the orangery, where high tea was served (though it was still scarcely lunchtime).

During the festivities Beenie slipped out for a few minutes and returned to give the assembled court its final little excitement of the day. All during the run from Fuddlecumjig (the Dromedary lolloping behind) Beenie had sat with the fabric of the live but substanceless Second Scarecrow neatly folded on her lap, and her hands lying lightly and lovingly upon him. Now she donned her friend for the last time and made her entrance.

There was a burst of delighted applause at the appearance of a Scarecrow who was more like the original man of straw than he was himself. If that sounds like a paradox, read on a bit. The popular acclamation was redoubled as the Second Scarecrow, with rubber-legged gait and a trickling sound of straw, advanced to extend a softgloved hand to the cotton-filled one of its other self. "How do you do?" said both effigies courteously.

Then they sat down side by side and nobody could tell them apart. The Wizard of Oz put down his cup with a clatter. "Most edifying," he praised. "And most mystifying."

"How do you explain it, Oz?" asked Princess Ozma from her place at the head of the table.

"I don't. It's a total enigma to me."

"Me too. I've thought and thought, ever since I met this 'Miss Scarecrow' on Estic all those weeks ago," recalled Ozma. "I was struck then by the fantastic resemblance—except for the hair—between our familiar old friend and our—er, new one. They are so precisely alike that one can't help but be-

lieve they came from the same source."

"But we did," young Sabrina ventured to insert. "During the trip Mr. Lawrence here told me all the details of how he was rejuvenated through the... application of a portrait by Mr. John R. Neill. So was I!"

Everyone was agog to know particulars so Beenie re-retailed everything the reader has learned from Chapter Three.

(We'll wait while you reread that.)

Ready? "How amusing," said the Queen of Oz. "So there were two portraits! Mr. Neill never said a thing when he dispatched his picture to us to hang in the Royal Gallery."

"Maybe he didn't want to arouse any question," suggested Princess Dorothy, "as to whether you were getting an original."

"But it *was* an original," protested the girl ruler.

"But was it *the* original?" persisted Dot annoyingly.

Everybody looked paff. How could they possibly tell?

"I *know* it was!" insisted Ozma. "I used the very word—!" Here the fairy blanched and broke off. 'Stricken' was the word for how she looked. It almost seemed she was going to break into tears.

"Wizard," she managed to get out finally, "what was the form of words you used in summoning to life the painted image of our old friend?"

(Here the reader may perhaps want to review Chapter Two as well.)

"Why, I don't know that I did use any form of words," replied the savant. "We just ran a layer of Permalife over the image in the painting, cut it out, attached it all around to the living remains of our dear old—if slightly tottery—friend, and violà."

"And I helped'," reminded Queen Ozma.

"Oh, everybody helped a bit," dismissed Diggs.

"No. I helped a lot," pursued the fairy, "though perhaps not with *that* particular bringing-to-life. I recall my words as

though they were yesterday. I touched the Magic Belt, which some of you may remember I was wearing that day in the room next door." The girl waved a hand in a general direction. "I pronounced, silently but apparently effectively: 'I command the original oil portrait of the Scarecrow of Oz by John Rea Neill to assume permanent and ineradicable life.'

"It happened—far away in an attic in New Jersey."

Beenie couldn't help looking around the assemblage of her friends with a certain smirk. She was the 'real' Scarecrow after all.

c h a p t e r t h i r t y - t h r e e

“Should we or shouldn’t we?”

Sabrina Amerul and Mose Maxton were asking each other this question—and hanging on each other’s reply.

“Oh, weez,” groaned Beenie sadly. “It says in the GOGTRAA that visitors to Oz, after all the loose ends of the plot are tied up, can’t wait to get back to their home towns however dreary these may be. So I suppose...”

“Nuts,” said Mose, just as rudely forthright as ever. “Think of it: the Dromedary with maybe the old captain aboard him, the Red Wagon with Dorothy and Tik-Tok and one or two Scarecrows in it, and possibly even Polychrome, invited back from that fantastic castle in the clouds, will be heading east toward Mount Munch or beyond to bring the word to Malchor to avast and belay—and we won’t be there.”

Beenie burst into tears. She knew, dear child, that this was the high point of her life. After a sojourn in fabulous Oz what could any normal life be but, slowly or faster, a trip downhill? To leave it before the last ride had been ridden on: how could anyone bear to?

“I wonder: do you suppose—would Ozma send a message?”

“I’m sure she would if she could. I noticed the Shaggy Man’s old telegraph ticker is still in working order—in the Museum wing.”

“Dad once mentioned that the Western Union office in Flanders closed down about the time I was born.”

“Is there a xeroxing shop in that town?”

“Hunh? Yeah, sure: Kwik-Kopy. Dad gets his printing done there.”

“Print shops always have a fax machine—and this queen girl has too. I saw it in her office. Come on!”

Mose grabbed Beenie’s hand and they tore outside. Ozma was standing at the estrade railing with her green lawn handkerchief raised. Tik-Tok at the reins had just called “Gid-dip!”

Ten words to the fairy ruler, then the two adventurers
raced on down the drive after the Red Wagon.

“Wait for us!... Oh, wait for us...”

Weekiwatchee: 1971
Bunkeflostrand: 5 November 1996

