

The
Crown
of **OZ**

by Michael Michanczyk
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Founded on and Continuing
The Famous Oz Stories
by L. Frank Baum

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The Crown of Oz
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C H A P T E R

O N E

The Purpleys were on the move again.

They had been quiescent for years and years—or was it centuries?—but now they had begun to well up and make their presence felt once more. In small details here and there perceptive people began to be aware of greater purplitude. Lilacs in May reached heights of rich red-violetness that had not been seen in living memory. Violets became so violet they were almost black, and black pansies got so dark they burst through and came out, as it were, on the other side in a purple so pale it was like looking at the sun through violet veils. Everything lavender became heliotrope and everything puce appeared magenta.

After some weeks or months of that, persons began to be somewhat concerned. In the Gillikin land of Oz all things were by now so purple they couldn't safely get any purpler. Entities that normally never were that color started to turn, like the water in lakes and streams, like grass and leaves, and people's skins!

Simultaneously with this change an alteration in human (even animal?) personality gradually began to assert itself. Gillikins became a thing unheard of: aggressive nationalists! They started to do unneighborly things like forcing visitors to the country to

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dye their hair purple, the better to blend with the general hair hue.

Viewing from the perspective of infinite time, we can see that they ought not to have got so worked up. What Gillikins were experiencing was a non-permanent concomitant of something that, according to tradition, had to take place periodically if the varicolored lands of Oz were to maintain their individuality. It was all part of the general plan for Oz laid down eons ago by the fairy Lurline or the giant Goorikop (authorities differ as to who was to blame) or whoever else may have magicized the magic land.

She, he, it, or they had ordained that primal motives in the very earth itself should control the coloredness of each country. These 'motives' were linked to agents deep in the core of the planet: the flow of waters, the gliding of rock faults, the very seething of the molten magma. They found expression in red volcano outboilings in the land of the Quadlings, the undammable flooding of the blue Munchkin River, the wide wide flats of yellow sand (the "Old Winkies") in the yellow land, and, in Gillikinland, in infinitely deep purple pools in dark violet forests.

These pools were not, however, pools of anything mundane like water. They were pools of liquid air; the pools had no bottoms that anyone had ever been able to find. Perhaps it was because they were so enormously deep that they gave the impression of holding back, of not dominating their respective region so much as did the broad blue river in the Munchkin land or the vast sand stretches of the open Winkie country.

Now that was changed. The pools had filled to the brim with soft-folding, all-enveloping thick air and the holes failed to contain the effluvium. It spread out over the ground in the deep dark violet forests. One might expect it to drown the trees in time. In fact it only made them flourish like purple bay trees! Unthinking people, seeing the flooded forests, might suppose it was water but when, after a ducking in the inundation, they found their clothes were not wet, they might

have to suppose again.

The time for such speculations was, however, not yet. The pools of the Gillikin forests were not a tourist attraction. Very few people were aware that they were there and the individuals who had actually visited them could be numbered upon the fingers of three hands. Not Mrs. Yoop nor Princess Gayelette nor the Kimbaloons nor Joe, King of the Uplanders, was more than very theoretically aware of the pools' existence. The only beings who looked upon them daily, or rather nightly, were certain owls who made their home in the forests and they were taciturn creatures who passed on no rumors or sounded alarms. They—and the Trolls, of course.

"Purpleys" I heard someone say, rather as if expecting to hear that the phenomena thus designated were sentient beings who, motivated by territorial designs, crept out of holes in the ground and ranged abroad, spreading consternation if not actual destruction. Let me correct the misapprehension at once. Occasionally Purpleys could and did appear as discreet individuals, distinguishable as smaller or larger conglomerations of cloud or fog but they had no separate personalities or intellects. If they were guided by anything that could at all be called a will, it was not a will subject to any influences brought to bear on individual Purpleys. One could as well reason with a Purpley as with a glacier or chastise one as effectively as an ape might punish an earthquake.

Thus when the Purpleys got on the move there was no stopping them. This was the season to be purple and the Purpleys were making the most of it. After all, it had been a very long time since they had last had their day. The primal forces in the other three principal lands of Oz had all in turn waxed supreme since the Purpleys' last pullulation. Indeed, it was so long since the entities representing the "primal force" in Munchkin blueness had been dominant that their very name had fallen out of the folk consciousness. The "Crimsons" of the South were only to be found named in the most ancient extant documents. The Old Winkies, on the other hand, were a concept still used by

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old-fashioned nurses to scare their babies and keep them in line. "Behave! Or those windy Old Winkies will cover you up in sand," they said.

Contrary to the opinion of those who may have flown around the world and never observed any "Oz continent" beneath them, the magic land is not on another planet. Just as angels and miracles are evident to those who are truly religious and visions quite tangible to genuine mystics, though not to sceptics looking with the naked and jaundiced eye, so Oz exists for the dedicated Ozophile and right here on planet Earth.

The fabled land shares in prevailing earth weather conditions. In the northern hemisphere the planet's winds as a general rule blow eastwards. In Oz this resulted over time in the sands of the Deadly Desert sifting in over the yellow land of the Winkies. Dry yellow winds carried the soil of Winkieland in over purple Gillikinland. By fairly recent times the xanthification of the purple land had progressed to where fully a sixth of what had been Gillikin territory was now shown on maps as being Winkie.[§]

But now that the Purpleys were on the move that oddness about the northeast Winkie border was the first thing that, almost as if they had minds and could make decisions, the Purpleys set out to rectify. A wave of purplitude rolled down from the mountains and out of the forests and up from the bottomless wells and swamped the Winkie frontier from Flathead Mountain to Loonville. People in Corabia, Double Up, Wackajammy, Tidy Town, Hotchinpotch, the Border Moor, and Winkie Marshland woke up one morning to find their fields of buttercups and dandelions turned in a night to beds of aubrietia.

Graver yet, the Gillikin people, made bumptious and vaunting by the newfound power of purple, made a surge southward, carrying their purplitude with them, to threaten the verdure of royal Ozma's own emerald land itself!

§ See *A Fairy Queen in Oz* where this theme is developed at length. editor's note.

C H A P T E R

T W O

Ozma, beloved Queen of all Oz, found herself simultaneously on her throne and in a quandary. She tried to shake off the latter but it was no go. What was she to do in respect of the large vat of green liquid that reposed three steps down in front of the dais?

She turned for counsel to her new favorite, Fattywiggins, also known as “Fattyw” or ‘Fatty” or, by those with whom she was not popular, as “Lardtub”. Fattyw nodded. Yes, there was no denying that the vat was there. She could see it just as plain. “See?” said Fatty. “It says ‘O.Z. Diggs Specialties’ in bright red letters on the base. I should say that the vat is made of plastic, only plastic hasn’t been invented yet.”

“No, but when it is,” asserted the Queen, “it will be found to be very much like our own native composition material, oztic. Yes, I think this is oztic. But isn’t the liquid a beautiful pellucid color?” Ozma exclaimed with delight.

“Mmmm—and it sits so still in the vat,” commented Fattyw.

“‘Sits’ did you say, darling?” The Princess regnant turned to look with interest. “Do you think of fluids as ‘sitting’? We were

always taught to say 'lying'."

"That's old-fashioned," instructed her young mentor. "It's the wave of the future to say 'sit' for everything; papers sit on the table, buildings sit in their grounds. Saves having to think, you see. It used to be that tall things 'stood', flat things 'lay'. But now we don't have to sprain our brains trying to remember if what we're talking about is tall or flat, or somewhere in between, and we just say 'sit' for everything."

"You make it all seem so clear, dear. I'm sure you're right. Now I know those chunks of what resembles floating on top are in fact ice. But what are those large formations underneath?" The girl ruler shuddered delicately.

"I don't like to think about them either," confessed the tubby pre-teen. "Let's wait and let the Wizard surprise us by identifying them for us."

"The wonderful Wizard has outdone himself this time," chirruped Ozma, just to be on the safe side. She could see that the crowd of courtiers in the Presence Chamber were getting restive and she well understood that they might be having qualms about the prospect of being invited to sample the poisonous-looking decoction. "I know he has sent us what will prove a magnificent treat," she said, trying to reassure them all but chiefly, perhaps, herself.

Everyone nodded distractly at what their ruler had said. Few were vocal. One or two, who didn't know what to think, shook their heads and spake not a word but, like dumb statues or breathing stones, stared each on other and looked deadly pale.

Ozma laughed nervously and made some remark about the "general acclaim", at which Fatty eyed her sceptically. She decided to call Her Majesty's bluff.

"What's the story?" she said.

"About the unusual preparations, you mean? Well, you know my twenty-first birthday is coming up again soon—"

"Yes, I know," murmured Ozma's devoted maiden in waiting. How could she not? There were banners up about it all around town and placards proclaiming the great fête to be held

on the twenty-first. There were even lampoons. Fatty had one in her pocket. It ran:

“Though she’s all wet,
We’re in her debt,
So don’t forget:
A present yet!
For Ozma on her birthday.
Oh, what fun!
As usual she’ll be
just twenty-one.”

One or two to whom the girl had shown the squib suspected she had written it herself. Fattyw for her part put the blame on Scraps, the Patchwork Girl, poet laureate to the beloved Queen of Oz, and it could not be denied that the effusion was in Scraps’ style. Needless to say, Fatty had not let Ozma see the verse—so far.

“The Wizard *would* insist,” went on the princess, “that the occasion required some special effort on his part. If anyone could provide a treat that would be marveled at and talked about for a long time to come, he was sure it would be he. This time he thought he’d like to try something in the way of an unusual flavoring, or even a combination of such savors, as it might be clams and chocolate or garlic ice cream. So apparently that’s what we’re up against in the vat before us. He assures me it tastes like nothing on earth. No wonder people are a bit concerned.”

“Are we meant to drink it right now?” queried the younger girl. “It seems rather a lot.”

Ozma laughed, enchanted. “Oh, dear me, no. It will first be served generally at the party tonight. We’ll have all the Emerald City to help us get it down. I’m merely requested now to give it my seal of approval, helped by my good friends here at court.”

The crowd burst into applause at this speech and Ozma smiled benignly.

Fattywiggins murmured confidentially, “What’ll it be like, ma’am? Have you any advance information?”

But here she drew a blank. Ozma spoke as from the Throne,

where, indeed, she was. "As for the flavor in the Wizard's brew, I have not sounded him, nor he delivered his purpose any way therein."

This left her little attendant back at square one. She essayed a prediction. "I guess there's no hope it will turn out to be nice lime... or spearmint?"

The gathering at the customary Wednesday audience broke into light laughter in anticipation of the wise and witty rejoinder that Princess Ozma was sure to make to that. The speech when it came left nothing to be desired in astuteness. The fairy ruler said, "One and all shall be invited in good time to sample the drink. In audience assembled we'll determine what it tastes like. Meanwhile, as we await the arrival of its capable creator—" Here Ozma could not prevent herself glancing at her watch. "I've commanded that the receptacle with its prized contents be carried to the kitchens, there to be decanted into a proper cut-diamond punch bowl. Upon the return of the preparation we shall begin our sampling."

C H A P T E R

T H R E E

Xavier Jaxon from Nossex had proven to be an asset in the combined laboratory and workshop of O.Z. Diggs, wizard of Oz. He had some knowledge of chemistry and what the Wizard regarded as a high mechanical aptitude. By now Diggs had come to appreciate how useful an assistant could be. Gosh, the amount of leg-work it saved him! Sometimes he wondered how he had ever got along before without such a handy piece of furniture to rely on.

Today the main project in hand was a slight, nearly frivolous one. They were concocting a special drink for the delectation of their beloved Girl Ruler. Xave was working at the retorts when the Wizard came in and said: "Is the punch ready for sampling?"

"Oh, yes, sir." Jaxon turned in some surprise. "The waiters fetched it quite some time ago."

"Oh, foop," cried Diggs. "I wanted to give it a last taste before it was taken to the presence chamber."

"Sorry! sir. I was sure you had given it your imprimatur when you were in last."

"Oh, I suppose I did."

"You know, that sea-mint flavor was not the easiest to

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achieve. The chemical make-up is complicated. Not like citrus flavors, for instance. More like apple or watermelon that have so far never been synthesized for flavoring sweets the way lemon and orange have."

"Yes, sir," said Xavier meekly. "What are you going to call it?"

"Some sort of 'julep', I suppose, it being mint," muttered Diggs thoughtfully.

"A tulip?" Xave only had normal hearing and his mentor *had* mumbled. "It's scarcely the right color, sir."

The Wizard guffawed. "Not 'tulip', my dear boy. A julep! A sea-mint julep that would make a Kentucky colonel go rigid—and not because of any alcohol in it either."

"Oh, well, there wouldn't be that, would there, sir?" said Jaxon. "This being Oz and all."

"No, that's right. It's just like a Sunday school here," agreed Diggs. Nor must it be suspected that there was even a hint of irony in the Wizard's speech. Like all certified Oz residents he was a card-carrying teetotaler, and this without his ever having been asked whether he wanted to be or not!

"The flavor of the julep is a real triumph," praised Jaxon. "All credit to you, sir. And if I do say so, the emerald green color is up to stuff as well."

"Verily!" Neither was the Wizard skimping with praise where it was due. "Ordinary food dye would have made the drink opaque but the emerald hue you came up with is as water-clear and sparkling as the gem itself. Together we've concocted what I think Ozma will long remember."

". . . 'long remember'," echoed Jaxon dreamily. He did a lot of remembering in these days so soon after his seemingly miraculous translation to Oz.[§] At times it came out in conversation.

"Professor," he said. Sometimes the Wizard was thus addressed when in the laboratory, although if he had ever been at college, which was not certain, it was only in the role of a

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

tourist and for half an hour. "Professor, you know what I find so strange?"

"Pray tell."

"That I *don't* find my recent adventures so strange!"

"You mean that, for instance, you found nothing odd about talking pigs on a train, carrying a lot of food supplies and luggage?"

"It all seems more like a dream than actual, if strange, reality. You know how everything in a dream, no matter how outrageous, seems at the time perfectly expectable and not surprising. That's how this all seems to me: a dream from which I don't wake up."

'That's exactly what it is,' thought Diggs wryly, but he wasn't going to tell Xavier that and risk spoiling everything. Instead he said, "Yes, and in a dream quite often you *know* it's a dream; can even discuss the dreamlike quality of it all and plan what you'll do when you wake up."

"Just so. And then of course I'd read Beatrix Potter as a child."

"What's that got to do with it?" demanded the Wizard, who was not a literary type.

"Well, you know: talking rabbits and all. So somehow it seemed quite natural to have talking pigs, with hands and feet, upon a train."

"You were ready," quoth Diggs oracularly.

"For . . . ?"

"For transferring to another plane as soon as anything the least bit traumatic happened. In your case the train wreck. You, and apparently they whole rest of your party, crossed the line." More oraculosity.

"To the invisible country, you mean?"

"Mmm. That's when you swam into my ken—"

"Yes, the water was pretty deep in that canal. I seem to remember—"

"Better not," said the Wizard, who wanted to get on with his own reminiscing. "You see, I'd long had my spectro-screen trained on those mist wraiths—"

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"The Norreganes?"

"Exactly — wherever any of them might be. It appears it's not all that seldom that detachments of the dread beings make it out into the so-called 'real' world. You did realize that it was they that tipped the train into the canal?"

"From what I've learned since I could guess as much," admitted the Englishman.

"They're holy terrors, really," sighed Diggs. "We have to keep constant tabs on them. Fortunately they do confine themselves mostly to the Invisible Country, which we keep monitored round the clock —"

"On the spectroscreen?"

"That's right. It's my own invention, you know. Well, the great Glinda did help — a little," said the Wizard disingenuously. "It's an improvement on Ozma's Magic Picture because it covers the whole spectrum of sense perceptions, hence the name."

"All except one, of course," put in Jaxon deferentially.

"Name one!" said O.Z., flaring up.

"Well, the sense of feel is missing, isn't it, professor? One doesn't actually touch-sense what is presented on the screen."

"We're workin gon it! We're working on it!" insisted the savant. "But come; we're wasting time, my dear chap," went on Diggs, nettled. "If we don't get ourselves to the throne room, we're going to miss out on the royal tasting of the punch."

C H A P T E R

F O U R

There was a sharp flourish of trumpets, the doors of the great reception chamber were opened wide, and the Royal Kapellmeister of the court of the Palace of Magic strode in. He was dressed officiously (as he would have said, but then his knowledge of Ozish was limited): a bright green uniform with epaulettes, a cross-band of iridescent fabric over the chest, and a wonderful high hat (even indoors and in the presence of his sovereign). Full mustachios and mutton-chop whiskers increased the size of his, in advance, full face. The Herr Kapellmeister was in charge of all musical arrangements for the approaching celebration.

"Greetinks, meine gnädige Prinzessin!" hailed the bandmaster with all due respect. "Ins besunders upon the occasion of your birthday fast approaching."

Ozma had been expecting to see the Wizard but, "Greetings to you in return, Herr Music Director," she replied genially enough. "How are things proceeding with the music for the ball?"

"Vielen tvickling Walzer, mit einsbegriffen Marschen, Foxtrots, Minuetten, und Sarabandes wird es geben—no doubt!" reassured the Kapellmeister.

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"Everything is progressing then with a certain swiftness?" Ozma understood. "I hear the fairies have been practicing for weeks now on a splendid choral piece with which they'll entertain."

"Ach, I see you should know in advance what to expect," deplored the musician. "Das hätte übrigens ein surprise should remain."

For no immediately apparent reason, unless to tease the Germany by a countering absorption in French, Fattywiggins, during the exchange in semi-German, had taken up a copy of Bergson's *Creative Evolution* and was ostentatiously reading it with concentration. Fatty, who often got things wrong, had thought to impress the spectators with her own show of "astuteness". In fact, all she got thought of as was rude. Alas, the girl had already acquired something of a reputation as a wise-acre, an opinion borne out for the onlookers by the pert remarks she had just been offering on the topic of the mysterious punch.

Suddenly, as part of a miraculous mid-air occurrence accompanied by a further slight musical fanfare, Fattyw found her book snatched from her and deposited on a nearby tabouret, while in her hands remained a hyacinth-hued box in the shape of a heart. Non-plussed and not knowing what to do with the box, the girl thrust it behind her, marveling as she did so over the nature of this new-arrived-at Land of Oz, where anything might happen and usually did.

To cover her confusion, and determined to insert some astuteness, *and* French, into the talk, she said, "Dear Ozma, I hope you are also going to allow some *musique moderne* to be played at the celebration...?"

"Why, Fatty, I wouldn't want anyone to feel slighted at my not arranging for—er, *musique moderne*," returned the ruler.

"'Moozeek moderne'! Musik modern?" huffed the Kapellmeister. "Was ist das?"

"Yes, Fatty, just what did you have in mind?" pursued Ozma.

"For your celebrations to come off as really contemporary and elite," said the younger girl, "I think there ought to be *musique*

moderne, and of the very avant-garde school to boot." She had not been reading *Creative Evolution* for nothing and now she found herself with the chance to show off her knowledge of music, French, and philosophy all at the same time. She at once discourse on the *élan vital*.

"Musique moderne," muttered the bandmaster. "Avant-garde school. I should live zo long!" He, like everyone at court, had had it up to there with the young upstart from the Home Counties who was causing disorders both in and outside of the Palace of Magic.

To the lovely fairy ruler of Oz he wanted always to display the greatest courtesy, and especially now when it was going to be her birthday, but he could *not* disguise his dissatisfaction at her paying so much attention to Fattywiggins with her overweening demands and spurious veneer of French culture. 'Ozma ought to be listening to her own people!' spluttered the German inwardly. As soon as Fatty was finished with the *élan vital* he said, "But—!"

"Is there any need for discussion?" the princess cut him off almost sharply.

"Er—nein, Your Majesty, the situation is ganz klar to me," stammered the musical director.

"Very well then. We shall have musique moderne at the birthday fête. You may take your congé for the nonce," declared the gracious queen, going a bit French herself.

"Ja wohl! Gnädige Hochheit," rumbled the Kapellmeister. He brought his heels together with a clack, saluted, and bowed. He was red-faced and the temperature under his collar had mounted but he still preserved the amenities as best he could. It was not the Princess' fault; no, it was that of that wretched butter-ball from outer Earth.

Still, as he neared the portal of the reception chamber and could now no longer be heard from the throne, he was unable to resist hissing to the two guardsmen on duty, "Musik moderne also! Und, what's more, aus dem Schule der avant-garde!" He threw up his hands and hurried out.

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Guardsman Lapstart blushed but Private Draxton, who was half cracked (but now where it showed), winked merrily in all directions.

C H A P T E R

F I V E

Princess Ozma had by now practically forgotten about the expected arrival of the Wizard of Oz and was going on to other matters. The little midair commotion had not escaped the notice of the alert fairy and she now turned back to Miss Fattywiggins, who was wondering what on earth she should do with the purple box in the shape of a heart. She couldn't keep holding it behind her back forever, nor could she, as she felt most inclination to do, drop it like a hot potato.

Suddenly the girl felt something at her wrists like the fluttering of butterfly wings and with a jerk she brought the tinfoil-covered box round in front of her, then uttered a mild shriek. A pint-sized fairy was dancing on the lid.

"Welcome, Peaseblossom!" called Ozma, still giving proof of her alertness. "What have you brought there?" She had been well aware all along that Fatty was hiding something and not anything the child herself was responsible for.

Peaseblossom genuflected energetically and cried, "Hail, o Princess. I bring you advance greetings from Her Feyness Queen Lurline on the occasion of your natal day. Also this little memento to sweeten the time of waiting until you shall be full twenty-one again."

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"It is most generous of the Queen to forward this gracious gift," declared Ozma.

"Her Feyness also sends word that the box contains a surprise other than the sweetmeats themselves," warned the fairy ambassador.

It will not astonish the reader to hear that this exchange had excited the never reticent Fattywiggins beyond the point of self-control. For minutes now, she had been licking her lips and now she brushed the fairy off the purple box lid and began fumbling with the catch.

Her renommée as a trenchergirl had preceded her and now she informally announced another of her claims to fame. "I'm Her Majesty's official taster," she told, fairly drooling in her eagerness to get her jaws on the dainty morsels that her soul divined lay in the box.

"Is that so, your highness?" enquired the tiny fairy, though she could scarcely expect that the gluttonous girl would lie right in the Oz ruler's face.

"Why, yes," assented Ozma. "That is our honored guest's court function while she is here."

"Ah, well," accepted Peaseblossom, "I dare say it will be in order then if the young lady takes the first piece... although I did have an impression that Queen Lurline meant the sweets for Your Grace alone."

Fattyw had by now had her way with the slightly recalcitrant lid. She removed it. Now her eye roved over the nut-covered puce-colored chocolates before her. Some of the sweets were wrapped in magenta foil. She took up one of the latter, deftly skinned it, and put it in her mouth. She noted that it had a jelly-like center and a flavor of violet. Chewing, she reached for a second piece.

Ozma made a little moue of disappointment that her favorite did not offer her any of the sweets. But "How are the chocolates, Fatty?" she asked tolerantly.

"Wait a minute," mumbled the girl. "I can't tell until I've had a few more." She put down the box on top of Bergson on the

tabouret and began to grab with both hands.

Suddenly Fattyw dropped the sweetmeats she was holdind and stuck her hand in her mouth.

"What luck is this?" she cried and drew forth a hard green candy center all gucky with half-chewed violet chocolate. In a moment a second such as disgorged.

Princess Ozma peered. "They look very much like emeralds," she vouchsavored.

Peaseblossom laughed delightedly. "Quite right, your majesty. Those are the surprise I told you about."

"Some surprise," grunted Fattywiggins, making a third trip to her mouth. This time she brought out a largist piece of a white tooth. Luckily it was an autumnally on-hanging baby one.

"Oh, my dear, are you all right?" said the Oz queen, concerend.

"I'm fine, your grace. Lucky that the hard centers aren't any larger. I could have choked. As it is, I think I've swallowed one of them."

"Oh, dear, and I was just about to say to Peaseblossom how pleased we are with the charming confections and to tell Queen Lurline that so far we hadn't had any accidents with the 'surprise'."

Fattywiggins had her own assessment of just how charming the gift was. As she nursed her aching jaw and gave over gobbling any more of the sweets, she planned just what her revenge should be. It took the form of declaring a private war on all Queen Lurline's fairy band!

C H A P T E R

S I X

“All roads lead to Nome” was a saying that had a very brief currency—of about a week—some years previously, but a currency only among the Nomes, that curious folk, and their allies, who had been thinking of taking over the Emerald City. Curmudgeonly old Roquat had suggested the motto, inasmuch as he was the ruler of the Nomes and leader of the expedition, and was planning to apply the name of this tribe to the conquered capital.

After Queen Ozma of Oz gave Roquat a case of amnesia and the takeover bid collapsed, the catch phrase fell into disuse, and the new town name reverted to the Alaska village, to which in fact no roads led. As for “All roads lead to the Emerald City”, that was too much of a mouthful and did not run trippingly on the tongue; it never became popular. Nevertheless, within Oz, the statement was true.

Not that there were “all” that many roads. For a long period the only road in Oz worth mentioning was the road of yellow bricks (later renamed “the Yellow Brick Road”) which, confusingly, ran principally through the *blue* country of the Munchkins and on to the capital. If there were any roads elsewhere no one had ever described them. But with the coming of Ozma as re-

gent all that was changed. Now there were roads everywhere, even in Gillikinland.

The country of the Gillikins was a region of rugged mountain terrain, formerly largely unexplored and somewhat backward in comparison to the other color-keyed lands of Oz. Now, however, during the term of office of the great Ozma, who was directing all her energies toward making progress the byword in her realm, all parts of the northern land were being better bound by roads. In particular a beautiful new highway of yellow brick, an offshoot of the Munchkin thoroughfare, now stretched across the mountains and through the land, right to the lip of the Soup Sea itself.

At the moment with which we are concerned two travelers were making their way south from that same Sea along the new road, and in their company three cows. The party were already growing a little weary, having left their last night's lodging at daybreak, but still they were light-hearted and chatted of more or less nothing as they went their way through the deep purple countryside.

One of the walkers was none other than Serena, the Sweetly Singing Seamstress. Her companion was Farmer Brownthum, happy proprietor of the three remarkable cows.

"Which gate will we enter the Emerald City by?" asked the maiden, just to be saying something.

"Oh, undoubtedly the north gate," replied Brownthum. "In fact I think it's called the Gillikin Gate. Do you know your geography?" he added with a mischievous smile.

Serena just giggled. She could see it was time for another lesson.

"Can you tell me the names of the various parts of the kingdom of Oz? beginning with our own home region..."

"The answer to the question is: Gillikin, Quadling, Winkie, Munchkin, and of course the District of Oz," stated Serena with a smile. Then both she and the farmer burst into laughter. The talk was being all too mock-solemn and trite.

What the companions were laughing about was the recent

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formal naming of one of the sections of the Land of Oz. This was another example of the poking of the nose of the irrepressible Miss Fattywiggins into the affairs of the fairyland. When she had first arrived she had been instructed as to the names of the four large constituent countries of Oz and their keynote colors. But then one morning, looking out of royal Ozma's bedroom window beyond the walls of the Emerald City to the green meadows stretching far away, she had said to her doting protector, 'What's the name of this green country then?'

"Oh, it hasn't got a name," said the little queen, startled to consider for the first time that this was so. "I suppose people just say 'the Emerald country'."

"Oh, dear, that won't do," declared the visitor forthrightly. Ozma, amused, asked why not.

"Well, your other lands, like the Munchkin one, for instance, which is as blue as this one is green—it isn't called 'the Blue country'—not officially, anyway—as an actual name. Anyway 'Emerald' as the name of the capital city doesn't refer to a color but to a jewel. By that token Munchkinland might be known as 'the Sapphire country'. It doesn't fit."

"You give it a name then, Fatty," said the princess indulgently.

So Fattywiggins thought and thought. She tried to remember parallels from her own country but failed. You couldn't call it a 'county' or a 'duchy'. It wasn't governed by a count or duke but by a Queen. Then she happened to recall another great land where they almost spoke her own language, English. Its capital was like the Emerald City: a metropolis surrounded by a modest belt of real estate that didn't belong to any of the contiguous political divisions of the country.

"Let's call it a 'District'!" she proposed triumphantly.

"Go ahead," encouraged Ozma. "District of what?"

Fattyw was stumped. She had to do more thinking. "'District of Emeralds'? No, you might as well say 'Emerald Country' and be done with it." Nor did the girl feel quite justified in making up a nonsense name of her own, on the order of "Quadling" or "Winkie". Fancy going out among the denizens

of the green hinterland and announcing, 'You lot are now to be known as "Wudkings" — or "Quilchies".' It hardly bore thinking of. In despair Fattyw finally said "District of Oz", and so it became, by royal fiat.

Serena and Farmer Brownthum could laugh about it now. Word of the English-miss' coinage had been spread abroad quickly. "So in a way one *could* now say that 'all roads lead to "Oz"', " summed up Serena.

"Indeed you could," agreed the farmer, "if you had to."

C H A P T E R

S E V E N

Ozma of Oz was not a subscriber to the teachings of astrology as we shall see had become the case with O. Z. Diggs, Wizard of Oz. She had, however, her own mystical leanings in the form of an involuntary belief in signs, portents, and prophecies.

Just now she was having a presentiment that there were going to be disturbances during the period of the twenty-first-birthday celebration. She could not foresee what form the problems would take but she was not going to be surprised if they in some measure should be connected with Fattywiggins.

‘Strange,’ she mused, as the hours passed. She was not quite able to say why the young English girl exercised such a fascination for her. Was it her beauty? Although Fatty possessed the ballooniest thighs ever seen on a female mortal of that age, she at the same time had a face of nearly breathtaking sweetness (in repose) and lovely mahogany-colored hair that curled endearingly about her heart-shaped visage, à la Betty Boop of a later day.

But Ozma didn’t want to admit that it was mere feminine prettiness in Fattywiggins that attracted her. She would have to search farther afield. She decided it must be Fatty’s character

that drew her. She was sure there was not a mean bone in the girl's body. It was just that she was so impulsive! That was the word. Fattyw did and said at once whatever came into her head. Then she had plenty of time afterwards for regrets. But anyway she *had* the regrets. That always saved the day.

There was, however, no denying that the newcomer posed a challenge to the Girl Ruler's thus far successful reign. Up to now no one had been able for any length of time to threaten her authority over all the fairyland. Nobody felt constrained by Ozma's lightly exercised rule and all had accepted her as sovereign, even such diverse and at times perverse types as the immigrant trolls in the northern mountains and the belligerent Hammer-Heads in the south. Farther afield, the Nomes, whose domains tunneled toward those of Ozma from the direction of Ev on the continental coast, appeared to recognize her for the time being as rightful overlady of Oz.

Was the little queen now going to find her renommée undermined from within by her partiality for the newly-arrived mortal girl with all her whims and caprices? Sadly, Ozma instructed herself to be on her guard. Though she ruled Oz, and with an abundance of élan vital, she was still, in this, her tenth year on the throne, unsure of the extent to which she might rule in a human heart.

Ozma could not deny it. She needed friends. Who doesn't? Furthermore she needed friends who were her peers as to sex and age. It was very well to have devoted pals in the form of men of straw, tin-plate, copper, wood and pumpkins, but close to her heart was a niche for a close girl chum, or chums. She had dear Dorothy Gale but Dorothy had her own family to whom she was at least as devoted as she was to the little Oz regent. And when Dorothy, as now, was away for long periods of travel and togetherness with her aunt and uncle, Ozma could know loneliness.

It was a sweet windfall then, when the delightful dumpling known as Fattywiggins turned up in Oz. The girl queen was devoted to the sprightly newcomer. However, she was clearly

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not going to put up with just *anything*. Would she be able in the end, by the example of her own good behavior, to win the willful madcap over to a course of more or less uninterrupted decorum?

Today now, at this audience, the younger girl was performing very badly. She had made loud remarks that seemed to question the bona fides of that curious bowl of punch the Wizard had sent in. She had almost grossly displayed, via-à-via the poor old Kapellmeister (the justice of whose position Ozma secretly acknowledged), a desire to score off rivals. Then, her gluttonishness and lack of regard for others in the matter of the gift of chocolates had been off-putting. ‘What next?’ thought the fairy with a sigh.

Suddenly a strange and untoward noise caught the girl ruler’s attention. Portents again! The fairies had once foretold that, if she did not continually mind every P and Q, animals, particularly domestic ones, might be the agents of Princess Ozma’s undoing.

She thought that, of all places, she ought to be safe in her own throne room. Yet she had to remember what a near thing there had been just last year, during that tiresome affair of the six-leafed clover. Then she had been forced to receive ruminants daily in the presence chamber and judge them on charges of having consumed, most often unwittingly, examples of the powerful hexing plant. She had come perilously near losing credibility in her fixed determination to enforce an essentially silly law. Still, she had weathered the passage.

After that she had issued a decree forbidding the presence of farm animals in or near the Palace of Magic, not to mention the very Inner Sanctum itself. Yet now Ozma distinctly heard the sound of moo-sique—and the old-fashioned kind at that.

C H A P T E R

E I G H T

Now the persiflage of the two Gillikin foot travelers was interrupted by an old woman who for some time they had been vaguely aware of as treading the road behind them. She caught up with the pair and without ado said, "Would you be so kind as to give me a taste of your cows' milk?"

Serena and farmer Brownthum looked at the crone curiously. She had spoken courteously enough, if without preamble, but there was something about her... Something of the look of a fairy, despite her age (for in Oz too fairies appear as ageless). The woman gave a toothy grin.

Without directly replying Serena took from her shoulder the two buckets used for milking and presented one for use as a stool. She said, "Have you walked far, dame?"

"Thank you, my dear," said the old woman as she received the other pail. My name is Mombi. Yes, I've traveled far from my home near the foot of the Gillikin Mountains."

The milking operation was carried out by the expert, Farmer Brownthum. He squatted on one pail, milked into the other. When he had taken about a cup's worth he returned the bucket to Mombi to drink from.

The old woman downed the liquid quickly. Then she indi-

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cated that she wanted to try the product of a second cow. Wonderingly, the country couple watched as she went on to drink from yet the third.

"Mighty good milk your cows give," said the old woman at last, with a burp, as she wiped her chin on the back of a wrinkled hand. "Actually I prefer buttermilk; it's so nice and sour. But that's neither here nor there. Now because you've shown a stranger kindness you will find you won't need to milk your cows again until you arrive at the Emerald City. I take it you're going to the District of Oz."

"Yes, we are," admitted the singing seamstress. "Thank you for your good wishes," she went on, not being sure whether to take what old Mombi had said as just polite noises or the announcement of an actual sorcery spell.

"We've been giving away the milk along the road," put in the farmer, "in exchange for food and lodging. But now we're almost there."

Barter and the exchange of goods and services were the system in Oz. Since the time of the abdication of the Wizard Diggs as dictator of the Emerald City, money had not been used as a serious means of exchange, although for fun people would sometimes, when stocking up on provisions, go through the ritual of handing over ozlings and qualints.

Recently, however, a new element had in fact entered the charming picture of a moneyless society. Unwilling any longer to be dependent on the unpredictable (g)nomes for the supplying of precious stones and metals, Queen Ozma had turned instead to the immigrant Trolls, also capable miners but thitherto not heard of in Oz chronicles. But most un-Ozianly the trolls demanded cash for their services. This was going to raise problems in the immediate days to come, indeed was raising them already, had the travelers but known.

But now Mombi was pinching pretty Serena's cheek lightly and promising that her charm would work. "Better than any fairy wishes you might get," she boasted. "My charms don't disappear with the dawn."

So saying, the woman picked up the two baskets she had been carrying and made off spryly along the mauve brick road. Within minutes she was out of sight over the next hill.

"Hm," said farmer Brownthum. "Not an unlikable old woman. I thought there was something of a—mm, magic-worker about her."

"You don't mean 'witch', do you?" asked Serena, suddenly serious. "Because she made it clear she doesn't belong to the fairies."

"Oh, the witches are all gone," informed the older man, "ever since Miss Dorothy from Kansas disposed of the ones of the East and West."

"What about the witch of the South?" countered Serena. "She's a witch. Not to mention our own dear Good Witch of the North?"

"Oh, but they're not wizened and ugly," returned Brownthum. "That makes all the difference. Somehow, when they're beautiful or charming, the word 'witch' sounds kinda funny and you want to say 'sorceress'."

"Well, witch or not, let's hope Mombi's spell doesn't turn out to be an evil one," concluded Serena.

C H A P T E R

N I N E

Ozma left her throne and strode forthrightly toward her honor guard at the doors of the audience chamber.

"Do my ears deceive me or do I hear *cows* in the outer corridor?" she required to know.

Guardsmen Lapstart and Draxton scratched their heads or beards or whatever other hairy places were available and looked awfully pale. Well they knew the prohibition against cattle in or near the palace.

The two were dressed in the style of an earlier day.

Otherwise-new-broom Ozma, on coming to the throne, had *not* made changes in anything quaint and colorful such as the way her palace employees got themselves up. Now the two men drew attention to their costumes by nervously fingering lapels or epaulettes or frogging.

"Yes'm," mumbled Lapstart, batting at a butterfly that had unaccountably landed on his nose, and looking cross-eyed, Draxton grew beet red and stuck out his tongue. Then he choked out the same reply, adding the honorific, "Your Majesty"!

The little exchange had given Miss Fattywiggins time to turn her attention from fairy Peaseblossom and run up to her protector at the doors to the antechamber. She was in time to hear

Ozma demand, "Do the cows have passes? Or whatever people may happen to be with them?"

The guardsmen swallowed and replied in the affirmative. How they knew, who never for a moment had left their places each side of the closed greened doors, was anybody's guess. A hint of the truth was probably contained in the strangled "— I guess" that Draxton added to his speech.

Ozma pondered, chin in hand. The matter of the possession of visitors' passes might be settled by a confrontation with the newcomers themselves. Graver for the moment was the issue of how two such idiots as these happened to be on guard duty (and "honor", at that) in her very own throne room. Crossing of eyes, sticking out of tongues, and coughing did not become such as were to be suffered to be in close attendance upon herself.

"Would you two men," spoke the ruler, "please meet me in the topiary garden at four this afternoon? I have new employment for both of you."

The men re-coughed, spluttered with nervousness, nodded their heads, and replied in the vernacular. "Four o'clock straight up and down, your highness," gasped the two in unison.

Now royal Ozma could give her attention to the trying Fattywiggins. She was a problem within the audience hall; the cows as yet were outside and could be hoped to be able to be dealt with later. The princess had seen the girl bend down and take up a green envelope that someone had pushed under the door of the anteroom. Then she had retreated to the neighborhood of the throne, where she was now quarreling loudly with Peaseblossom again.

"Get off the throne," the girl shouted. "You don't belong on Ozma's throne. You're just a fairy."

"Fairy, schmairy," replied Peaseblossom insouciantly. "So's Ozma a fairy. Are you going to try to keep all fairies off all thrones? Our Queen Lurline always lets us sit on her throne when she's not using it."

"That's only ordinary-fairy royalty—if that," raged the tire-some Fattywiggins. "May I ask your title!"

C H A P T E R

N I N E

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"You may not," said Peaseblossom, giving as good as she got.

"If you don't move I'll sit on you," threatened Fattyw, and so saying she made her word deed. Abruptly Peaseblossom vanished.

Most curiously, at the same moment the agonized mooing of the corridor-confined cattle stopped at a stroke. Everyone rejoiced in the silence. The crowd in the court room could now hear perfectly as the Princess spoke in a subdued tone, "Fatty, would you please leave as quickly as Peaseblossom and wait for me in the antechamber?"

Fattywiggins was speechless. Just for a moment, until she burst into tears. She had just been going to present to her sovereign with all ceremony and delight the mysterious envelope—and now this. Abruptly she stuffed the paper into her pocket and fled from the throne room. 'Oh!' she cursed to herself; she would *never* have been ordered out had it not been for that fairy!

C H A P T E R

T E N

The train of cows and people began moving along the lilac brick road again. The backs of the placid cows were loaded with all the travelers' luggage. Besides the ordinary requirements of the road such curiosities as a sizable harp and an ice-cream churn were to be discerned.

"I wonder if we'll be able to find ice for the machine," said the farmer, "once we reach the city."

"I should think anything you can find elsewhere in Oz will also be available in the capital."

It began to look like more merely desultory chat was going to be the order of the day when ahead a tremendous whirring noise was heard and a lone rider on an old-fashioned unicycle came rushing down the road.

"Look out for the cow!" shouted farmer Brownthum but the cyclist made his way past the herd deftly without even slacking speed.

"I've never seen one of those before," remarked Serena.

That was the only bit of excitement until presently the group came to a spanking new roadsign stating "Now entering the District of Oz". The young Queen had lost no time in translating into realia her new favorite's choice of name for the green

country.

Thus reminded, Mr. Brownthum said, "'Do you have our passes for the audience ready?'"

"Yes. I've put them away for safekeeping close to my heart," replied the girl comfortably.

Then in a few minutes they topped a rise and saw in the distance in all its glory the Emerald City. Its great towers, high as the sky, glistened in the sun all grandly green, in stark contrast to the intense purple they would now be leaving behind. And yet, somehow, not quite so intensely green as they had expected? Faintly lavendery, was it?

"Looks like we'll get there in time for the audience all right," opined the farmer. "Maybe even have time for a bite to eat beforehand."

"Yes, and to find some place to stay," rejoined his young woman companion. "It will be good to have a rest after three days on the road."

But mostly the two wayfarers just gazed in unaffected wonder at the magic city which neither of them had ever seen before but only heard about in dreams.

The journey of these two was a tiny part of a new policy implemented by the wise and interested young Girl Ruler of Oz as part of her campaign to open up her kingdom to general enlightenment. She now regularly sent out invitations to likely persons in outlying regions to come and pay a call on her in the form of attendance at one of the regular Wednesday audiences.

Serena had received her bid because she was the Sweetly Singing Seamstress and her renown had reached even as far as the court at the Emerald City. The news of her honor reached the Brownthum household when Serena was running up a frock for the farmer's wife.

"Why, land sakes!" exclaimed Mrs. B. "My Abner has got an invite to the very same things! 'Count of the cows', you know. Why, you two ought to travel together!" she cried, a thought of jealousy never crossing her nice mind. "It would be the most natural thing in the world."

That had decided it. The farmer and the needlewoman had always been pleasant nodding acquaintances and they ought to make perfectly amiable traveling companions. As for occasions for jealousy, Serena had an additional and compelling reason for going to town which quite precluded any need by the farmer's wife for anxiety at the thought of her husband and the pretty girl in close daily contact. Practical considerations too dictated the teamship: the broad back of a placid cow would be ideal for the transport of Serena's necessary and largish harp.

Farmer Brownthum, as he peered across the meadows and parks to the gleaming amethyst—I mean, emerald towers of the capital, recalled the little formal farewell breakfast that had inaugurated their enterprise. The older couple had gone to fetch the seamstress at her little house. There they sat down to a sumptuous repast.

The farmer remembered the menu fondly. Freshly crushed tomatoes had yielded a rich juice, afterwards flavored with red and rosé peppers. There were large squares of crisp toast buttered and heaped with diced mushrooms in a mild gravy. Coffee or alfalfa tea was served according to choice. Oh, and not to forget: hot muffins rich with Serena's own delicious preserves. The girl was bringing along as a little gift some jars of the latter.

The farmer's daydreams were rudely broken into by the abrupt arrival of further unicycles which appeared suddenly out of a little dell and bore down on them.

This phenomenon was all new to the bucolic travelers but represented an already established part of new-broom tactics in Oz. Fattywiggins again! The fat girl, seeing Oz laid out with bright new yellow roads crisscrossing everywhere, had said to potent Ozma, 'What a waste; slick-surfaced roads all over and nobody to ride on them. You don't have any horses in Oz and automobiles haven't been allowed in. Rut people don't need brick pavements just to walk on. What's the big idea?'

"Hm," said Ozma, vexed. "We thought of roads as opening up Oz; making all parts readily accessible to all others. But you're

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right, I see now. For mere foot travel a network of paths and trails would have made more sense. Easier on the feet too. Any ideas?"

"Well, bicycles anyway," suggested Fattywiggins, her thoughts speeding back to the puncture before Margate that had begun the chain of events that landed her where she was now.[§] "I've always loved biking. what if you implemented your opening-up campaign by establishing a fleet of swift messenger-carrying bikes?"

That's what Brownthum and the seamstress were experiencing now. Ordinary communications in Oz were slow, even virtually non-existent. Letters took ages to arrive, most often being delivered by hand by travelers. Now the speedy unicycle brigade was changing all that, relaying messages all about the kingdom in a mere day or two.

Again the farmer quickly herded his charges to the side of the road. The speed demons swept past with shirt-tails flying. In the silence that followed there was heard a cry.

"Oh, look! There ahead!" spoke Serena.

Behold: poor old Mombi was sprawled in the middle of the road. The woman was calling out for someone to assist her in getting up. By some fluke both her baskets rested upright.

Serena ran swiftly down the road and helped the sufferer into a sitting position and so to her feet. She dusted her off and handed back to her the two baskets, all the while the crone muttered and moaned about the unicyclists and the speed at which they rode. But she ended at last by saying, "Once again I am in your debt," and she wiped away a few tears. "Is there anything I might do for you?"

"Not for me," replied the sprightly grisette. "Thank you just the same. But Mr. Brownthum is going to be needing some ice for the ice-cream maker."

"Ice," said Mombi, now more or less restored and speaking thoughtfully. "Tiresome stuff. It *will* go and melt on you. However..."

§ Again, see *Fattywiggins and the Caresso-Pigs in Oz*. Editor's note.

Farmer Brownthum had by now caught up with the others and he watched with interest as Mombi took one of Serena's pails and threw into it some crystals she produced from a pouch at her waist. The woman mumbled a few quick words and gave a wave of a gnarled hand. There stood a bucket of solid sparkling lavender-green ice.

"How's that?" said the old dame with pardonable pride. "And you'll find this ice won't melt. It can be used over and over again."

Serena just clapped her hands in delight. Even Farmer Brownthum had to grin broadly. This was magic you could see on the spot. No doubting the beldame's capacities now.

"Perhaps we should travel on together," suggested the farmer. "We can make sure you don't get no more upsets—'til you get to the city gates or the palace or wherever you're going."

"Don't mind if we do," said the witch contentedly. It was her way of speaking graciously.

Upon the opening by the honor guard of the doors to the antechamber so that Fattywiggins could pass out, the cow contingent from way up north in Gillikinland made its entry. As the two parties passed each other Fattyw did a double take. She'd never seen a purple cow. She'd never hoped to see one. But now that she had she bitterly regretted that she was not going to be allowed to watch what happened next within the Presence Chamber.

Ozma had by now regained her composure and her throne. She sat down with a tiny gasp of relief and said, appearing most queenly (she would have appeared most princessly, but I don't think one can), "What have we here, my good man?" She was addressing dear old Farmer Brownthum, who had followed his animals into the great hall.

"I have brought, per commando, my three extraordinary cows, Your Majesty," replied the countryman. "And also myself," he added modestly. "Oh, and may I introduce my companion, Serena the Sweetly Singing Seamstress?"

Ozma put down her orb and sceptre, which she had natu-

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rally taken up on reassuming the throne, and clapped her hands in seemly delight. "Of course! I sent for you. I recall now only too clearly. Now wasn't I silly to worry about cows in the palace when I had actually asked you to bring them!" Her chagrin was touching to behold. 'I must be more than twenty one,' she added, to herself. 'More like ninety and getting past it!'

The farm duo, whisking into use the two buckets, were already starting an ice cream production line right there in front of queen, God, and everybody. Farmer B. milked and when the milk had been dumped in to the ice cream churn Serena cranked vigorously. The agriculturist kept up a running commentary. "This is the first of my extraordinary cows," he explained. "Her name is Bossie. That's just a standard cow name. It's not because she's bossier than the rest." Briskly he moved his bucket stool along to cow number two. "And this one's Chippie; again, not at all because she's the least bit wanton."

For a moment there was a hold-up as they waited for Serena to be through turning Bossie's milk into ice cream. To fill the interval Brownthum asked that a cup be brought, or perhaps several. A beaker duly made its appearance and he dipped up a foaming portion of the product of the number two cow and presented it respectfully to the girl ruler.

"Now, Princess Ozma," he addressed his sovereign, "I want you — most graciously! — to taste this creamy milk... What do you think?"

Ozma gasped. "Goodness gracious," she murmured, impressed. "Why, it's all chocolatey!" And quickly she drained the mug.

"Aha," said the farmer with satisfaction.

As Ozma drank and Serena churned a curious little tableau meanwhile took place. The antechamber door could be seen by the observant to open a crack and a young girl slipped her hand through. The door had to gape considerably more widely for her whole body to pass into the audience hall. Then a moment later the handsome head of a third guardsman appeared round the edge of the door.

Abruptly his gaze was transferred from Fattywiggins, his legitimate quarry, to pretty Serena sweating at the churn, and he started. At almost the same instant the seamstress-churnstress noticed the newcomer. She blushed. The guardsman waved; the maiden waved back.

Queen Ozma, looking into her empty cup, had not yet taken account of the little passage. She was musing on: "All due praise to Chippie! It is just wonderful that so gifted a cow should exist." But then she raised her gaze and was in time to see the policeman-like hand of the third guardsman descend on the shoulder of the disgraced Miss Fattywiggins. With a view to encouraging the obvious intention of her henchman Ozma imperiously signed for them to quit the audience room. This they did.

Still milk-bemused the princess now left the royal chair again and moved to where Shamrock patiently awaited her turn at milking. She noticed the pattern of violet four-leafed clovers on the animal's hide. "What delightful flavor do you yield? I wonder," the girl graciously addressed the cow.

"Your Majesty shall try it for yourself!" cried Farmer Brownthum enthusiastically. "All in good time."

In good time Serena had completed the turning of Bossie's milk into fine, plain-flavored ice cream which she spooned into a row of cups and sent round for general sampling by the courtiers in the hall.

The farmer tipped half a pail each of the milk of the second and third cows into the churn and Serena was off again. Brownthum made conversation: "Shamrock also is generous with her milk. The milk is always cool too. None of that hot-from-the-body warmth that puts city-dwellers off. Yet all three flavors of milk taste equally good when warmed up artificially before bedtime..."

Ozma was musing once more. 'These seem like rather sweet old cows. Certainly nothing dangerous. Could it be that that prophecy about the fatalness of livestock was in error?' Indeed, it might have seemed a shame if these talented animals had not

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been able to be presented to her.

The seamstress had sailed on to a photo finish at the churn. Triumphantlly she dug a huge scoop of the newest ice cream from the churn bucket and filled Ozma's cup. She stepped before the girl ruler and offered the treat with a curtsy.

"Heavenly days!" the fairy princess was pleased to exclaim. "How wonderful!" She stared into the mug with its faintly lavender brown-flecked contents. "Mint chocolate ice cream!"

Hearing her praise, the crowd in the hall burst once more into resounding applause and lined up to have their beakers filled with the new taste sensation.

C H A P T E R

T W E L V E

Just as the Munchkins had their Blue Gnu and the Winkies a Yellow Yak, there was also a heraldic animal for the land of the Gillikins and that was a Purple Pig. Nobody seemed to know the origin of these beasts. There was nothing very appropriate about them as symbolic creatures, no more so than that anyone out in the great world could tell at a glance why King Louis XII of France should be symbolized by a porcupine or Richard II of England by a White Hart. That was just the way it was and there they were.

Antiquarians studying the case had taken note of the fact that the Beasts of Oz were all monosyllabic in name. There was also the Red Bear and the Emerald Elk. Other than that there seemed to be no unifying principle behind the choice of ‘favorite’ animal. “Gnu” rhymed with “blue” and three of the names started with the same letter as the descriptive color-word associated with them. Beyond that, guidelines broke down.

When, some years later than our present story, the little upstart country of the Unnikegs got going, the bustling inhabitants, intent on having their own version of everything traditional in other parts of the magical land, knew no better counsel than to choose the Ox to be the Orange beast. This

did not reflect well on their virility but then such was never important in Oz anyway. Oh, one thing more: none of the heraldic animals was of a color found in them in nature.

That is to say; nature as we know it ex-Oz. Of course the pigs in Gillikinland were purple! Latterly they were purpler than ever. What is rather grizzly to relate (although what color of sliced and oozing flesh would not be grizzly, when you come to think of it?): the pork chops were purple at the court of Prince Randy and the nobles of Pumperdink ate violet rashers for breakfast. Joe King of Upland and his queen Hyacinth were eating mauve ham sandwiches at the moment our chapter begins.

"Make it last, my dear," quoth King Joe. "This *is* the last."

"The heliotrope ham, you mean?" said Hyacinth, licking her fingers. Lavender lard tastes lovely and in fact its cholesterol count is rather low (not that they knew anything of, or could worry about, such concepts at the period of this tale).

"Yes," said the king. "The Foresters were with me yesterday and reported they'd delivered to the palace kitchens the last wild boar there's likely to be for many a day. They seem to be extinct!"

"In Oz?" said Hyacinth incredulously. "Why, nothing can become extinct in Oz! Everything lives forever."

"Yes, lives. But exists? Can you suppose that bacon 'exists' any longer after you've eaten and digested it?"

"Well, I'll concede that it is then no longer very... 'like itself'. But what are you getting at, dear Joe?"

"Gillikin ham is a delicacy. Rather, *was*. It was so popular supply couldn't keep up with demand. Pigs are passing from the scene in Gillikinland. There's an absence of them. Butchers can't keep people in pork."

"Let them eat cake," said the queen unfeelingly.

Thereafter the conversation languished.

But the unfortunate state of affairs remained. While everything else in the northern land was getting more purple, Gillikin pork was getting less—in quantity, that is, not purplitude. Persons in authority felt that something was going to have to be

done if the heraldic beast of the kingdom was not to die out entirely, and breakfast plates become less appetizing.

Joe, King of the Uplanders, did not forget the problem following the indecisive luncheon with his queen. By and by he essayed to do something about it. Joe had no incantatory powers of his own and as he realized that there must be no less than magic to the fore in curing the present shortage he looked about him for assistance afield.

He thought of witches. They had featured a lot in news reports of recent years. It had been mostly good news—about bad witches; to wit, their annihilation. No use calling on destroyed witches, of course. For preference, one didn't want to employ a wicked witch at all, be she ever so powerful. That was why King Joe sent no message to the local witch, Mombi. She hadn't (yet) been outright destroyed but her reputation was not of the best and she lived, as far as he knew, a very withdrawn life in the foothills of the Gillikin Mountains.

What about good witches? Well, the northern land had had its own resident Good Witch for many years but she had some seasons ago suffered a water (though not directly sea-) change into something new and strange[§]; so strange, in fact, that it was not even known at the present moment whether she still existed.[£] No joy there.

There was one good witch more. This one had always possessed a great deal of dignity and authority and besides (and probably most important in the eyes of frail mortals) she was nice-looking, so she was one of the ones one tended to think of more as a "sorceress" than as a "witch". Indeed, if one were a high official in her fan club one got quite upset if the word "witch" was used. However, a later-day campaign to sanitize Oz and render it totally innocuous, sexless, and boring, failed and a witch Glinda well and truly remained.

It was to her that Joe King addressed his letter and plea and he sent it off by unicycle messenger. The Good Sorceress of the

§ See *Uncle Henry and Aunt Em in Oz*.

£ See *The Good Witch of Oz*. Editor's notes.

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South read the application with interest. It recalled to her information of developments that she had of course been aware of, through daily perusal of the Great Book of Records.

Glinda put a (non-habit-forming) jalaneño dope-stick to her lips and leant back to ponder. Presently she jotted a couple of notes to herself, the practical results of which gradually became known to the world at large and especially in Gillikinland. The first of these was a reminder to invite some of Queen Lurline's fairy band, when now they would arrive en masse, as per custom, to attend Princess Ozma's birthday festivities, to take up temporary residence in the north of Oz, just to keep an eye on things. It would be helpful as well to be able to call on the fairies in any emergency in the matter of the resurgence of the Purpleys, with which phenomenon Glinda was au courant long before word of it was to reach the less worldly Girl Ruler, Ozma.

Some years previously the latter wise and kind little potentate had declared an open-door policy as regarded world faerie. With the coming of such developments as the telephone, radio and airplanes, belief in the great world in the existence of wee-folk had plummeted. This had resulted in fairy pogroms worldwide. National governments decided that people would be better able to hold to non-belief in elves, brownies, trolls, and the like if they never saw any. The upshot was edicts expelling native fairy populations from many countries.

When Ozma learned of this[§] she at once promulgated a law declaring that all exiled fairy folk were welcome in Oz. The resultant invasion was terrific.

Sprites and goblins arrived by the million. Luckily many of them were tiny; as with angels, large numbers of them could dance on the head of a pin. Hence fairy overpopulation did not become a grave problem. But somewhat of a problem it did become, so much so that royal Ozma felt constrained to ask some of the rulers of outlying countries on the Oz continent to house contingents of the newcomers.

Thus it was that the celebrated fairy band of the High Queen

§ See *A Fairy Queen in Oz*. Editor's note.

Lurline had increased in numbers from thirty-one to two thousand! And the Forest of Burzee was quite spilling over with them.

There were plenty to spare to go live in Gillikinland and help out with one thing and another, including measures to be taken toward ending the diminution of the pig population.

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

No sooner had the cows, together with all the paraphernalia of milking and ice cream making, been removed from the audience hall than Serena's harp was set up and positioned close to where royal Ozma reseated herself. Now the sweetly singing seamstress stepped to the instrument to demonstrate why she had been invited to court. She played most sweetly upon her harp and all the sweeter for the sight she had gained of a handsome head stuck in at the anteroom door.

First on the programme was a ditty about eternal love that blossoms in a day but can last an entire lifetime. As a matter of fact the piece was revived many years later and was featured in the film of *Hello, Dolly* where it was sang as "It aownly takes a maowment to be loved a whaowle life long".

Next Serena sang of the night and of the special spell woven by that time of day for those who are not sleeping. It was called *Lullaby for Insomniacs* and had a very monotonous rhythm that caught perfectly the tempo of sheep jumping over a pasture gate. Ozma and one or two others found themselves nodding but woke up when the songstress stopped and they applauded vehemently.

Of course there was nothing for it but that the Sweetly Sing-

ing Seamstress should oblige with an encore. For it she chose a song about Ozma's birthday and how through the years the lovely fairy would always retain her beauty and at the age of a hundred (if she should ever allow herself to be more than twenty-one) she would still look much the same. The paean went by the catchy title of *Age is Mostly a State of Mind in Oz*.

Ozma was clapping with the others when the doors from the antechamber parted again and the attractive guardsman led in a wizened little old woman, heavily veiled.

The girl ruler was promising herself that this was going to be absolutely the last person she would receive at this audience, which she had allowed to run on for entirely too long a time. Suddenly she gave a gasp and leant forward impetuously.

A cold feeling passed over the princess. Her mind flew back ten years. Surely—but oh, no, it couldn't be—and yet, surely, was it not the aged and wicked Mombi who was approaching her? How dared she have the insolence to present herself here?

"Who is this? Why have you brought her here?" the disconcerted Queen demanded of the guardsman.

"Your Majesty, I found this old woman wandering in the topiary garden. She seemed to be looking for something. When I confronted her she said she had a pass or invitation from you to appear before you here today. She was only waiting for the entertainment to be over before carrying out her intention."

Now the old woman herself spoke, saying, "Indeed, Your Highness, such is the case." Here she flourished an emerald-colored card. But the voice! There is no describing its witchery. Rich and resonant, its honeyed tones amazed all who heard it. It was no wonder that the palace guardsman had been charmed and at once conned into showing the woman into the presence chamber. Now all the courtiers there attendant followed suit and fell under the spell.

Great Ozma did the same. This was no Mombi, whose quarrelsome whining voice the little princess remembered but too well. And yet... the figure was precisely the same. If only she could see her face. Besides its being confusing, the ruler was not

quite sure but what appearing at a royal reception veiled was not *lése majesté*. It was like coming in with your hat on.

"May we not see your face?" she asked the visitor.

"Ah, alas, Your Serenity," smurved the witch. "My veil is to shield your eyes. A disfigurement too terrible..." she lied glibly. Anyway she did not complete what would have been a totally false statement.

Well, nobody wanted to have to gaze upon the face of an elephant- or rat-woman on the eve of her birthday, so Ozma let it pass. "What business brings you here?" she enquired.

"Why, I have come to bring you these eggs," said the crone, and here she uncovered one of her baskets. Ozma looked at the curiously large purple eggs.

"Those wouldn't be hens' eggs, would they?" said the ruler doubtfully.

"Hens of different species, if you'll pardon me," replied the dame. "Peahens, turkey hens, and the like. I reared the birds myself. But that's beside the point, which is that through my powers as a seeress I divine that these eggs will be of help to you in the crisis that is coming."

Ozma's heart sank. She too had her modicum of second sight, at least enough to know that her subject was not talking through her hat. Perhaps this was the explanation of the qualms she had felt at odd moments all through the morning. "'Crisis'?" she repeated faintly.

"Yes, indeed, I'm sorry to say. Has word not reached you earlier, Your Grace?"

"Of what?"

"Why, the resurgence of the Purpleys! I thought everyone knew. It's been going on for some time."

There is a moment which is the first at which word of a great disaster reaches one. Sometimes that moment remains unforgettable. Speaking now from a later time, we can remind that everyone[§] remembers exactly where he was and what he was

§ At least, every American over a certain age. See *The World on November 22nd*. Editor's note.

doing at the moment when he heard of the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Such a moment now was that at which Princess Ozma of Oz heard from her foster mother (though she was not to be aware of this circumstance at the time) of the "Purpleys plague". She never forgot the scene at the end of that interminable public audience.

"No," she breathed. "Please tell us."

The knowledgeable witch obliged. At the end of her presentation she called on her erstwhile companion of the road, fair Serena, whom she had observed still lingering among the spectators at the reception.

"Is it not so?" she asked for confirmation. "Is not everything in our country of the Gillikins much purpler than has ever been seen before? And is not that same purplitude spreading?"

Serena pressed her lavender hand to her purple locks and consulted her memory for an instant. She was able to confirm the implication. "I'm sure you're right. I hadn't thought about it all that much but certainly all is as purple as purple can be at home. I remember too being startled at how green the District of Oz looked in contrast, and yet somehow not *quite* so different as I think I'd expected. A bit more mauvey."

"And will get mauvier," predicted Mombi (I hope not with a malicious leer).

"What do you mean?" demanded Ozma, alarmed.

"As I say, the problem is the most serious along the frontier with Winkieland but eventually it will gravely affect the Emerald City as well. The purplitude is spreading. Your Augustness would do well to take measures. I believe these eggs will be of assistance."

Provokingly the woman did not say how but with a deep genuflection backed out of the throne room. Ozma remained looking thoughtfully after her.

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

Queen Lurline herself traveled to Gillikinland to see members of her band settled in.

The region assigned for their residence was a hitherto underpopulated one between the Backwoods and Nightingarden. It was chiefly distinguished by its abundant grape harvests and in the event it may have been an unlucky choice. Fairies by nature are enthusiastic and ebullient spirits and the prospect of the upcoming festivities in connection with princess Ozma's birthday was rendering the sprites scarcely able to contain their euphoria. If the fairies were not tipsy already they gave a good imitation of it. A small group, close to royal Lurline herself, were behaving in the following way:

They lolled among the grape vines and talked of what treats they expected to enjoy when presently they would all make their way to the Emerald City. Being ladies they were naturally much exercised about their appearance. Queen Lurline initiated the discussion by letting fall this remark: "My hair is ravishingly golden but I wonder if it would not be improved by putting some lavender rinse in it."

"My Queen," replied Titania, "you would spoil all your hair's natural loveliness. You do appreciate that yellow blended with

purple produces merely a muddy brown. Such would be too ordinary a hair tint for one so exceptional."

"Well, it was just an idea I had." Then presently the queen resumed, "At least I haven't gone to the extreme that some of you have and put my hair up in blocks."

This was a reference to certain fays' determination to keep abreast of human fashions of the period, when all hair must be crimped in order to rate consideration as being in style. Even now a dozen of the sprites were perched on vine poles and leaf tendrils, enduring the discomfort of the encasement of their locks in tiny vise-like wooden blocks.

"I don't know how you girls can stand it," Titania seconded the queen.

"It's actually quite painless," hiccuped Cobweb. Her coiffure was usually distinguished by an entanglement of webs and tiny spiders but she had washed those out in the interest of up-to-date trendiness. "I never worry about it at all," she pursued. Then she took another sip from a foxglove cup at her side.

"What suffering for beauty," commented the fairy leader, unconvinced by Cobweb's disclaimer. "But if the results justify the means..." She let her thought die away unresolved.

"I've just had a wine shampoo," announced Mab. "The claret seems to have inebriated me slightly right through the scalp. What an odd effect."

Moth for her part said, "I achieved the same result by using champagne as hair spray. Quite frankly, I like it. It is so much more genteel than grossly *drinking* the beverage."

It became evident that some of the immortals, on taking up residence in this oinological neighborhood, had not been content merely to sip at the ripe fruit itself but had also had recourse to the distilled and fermented products of earlier years' harvests which were stored in abundance its caves and cellars in the vicinity.

As we have seen, fairies can be of any size from microscopic up to that of fully grown humans. Rarely do they grow beyond the latter limit. It is hard to picture fairies as big as whales.

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For most purposes they preferred the smaller range of sizes. Provisions simply went that much further when one was tiny. In the fairyland of grapevines it was the greatest fun to hover on gossamer wings, stick a sharp-ended grass straw into a ripe muscadine, and drink the juice direct. Most of the dainty sprites preferred that form of enjoyment of the grapes over imbibing aged fluids found in musty barns.

C H A P T E R

F I F T E E N

The Ugliest Troll lived under the cliffs that barred the Soup Sea from the land. There, in a cave carpeted with silver slime, he lay in a pool of many-colored seaweeds and snoozed among the pearly volumes of many great and learned books.

One stormy night a little fish was pulled up by the strength of a wave and thrust through the air by the wind into the dreaded lair of the ugliest troll. The fish landed on his side, slapping the surface of the pool in which the troll lay asleep, hitherto undisturbed by the echoes created by the tempest's voice. The ugliest troll awakened with a start, for the little fish had made the quietest noise in the cave.

The troll lifted his huge fin-hands out of the pool and brought them together in a prayer-like fan. Raising his nose from the water in order to smell what time it was, he discovered the little fish floating on the surface of the pool between volumes of Indian poetry and Buddhist logic. The books were finished in the best skins that the sea could supply.

"How did this little fish get into my grotto?" the disturbed troll said to himself. "Does the wind dare to mock me with offers of unacceptable food?"

You see, this troll, in contradistinction to the burden of

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legends oft repeated, did not eat his fellow creatures. Instead, he was a vegetarian and ate only of the seaweed that filled the pool in which he slept and round which he housed his enormous library. True, the volumes were bound in the skins of creatures of the sea, but the troll thought this a humane way of immortalizing those carefully selected, so he supposed, by the sea because of merit and delivered to him by the wind which received them from the sea through the medium of flying spray and whirling foam.

Pensively the ugliest troll smacked the water in order to awaken the intruder. "Wake up, wake up, wake up, little fish!" Notwithstanding his many-volumed library and years of hard study, the troll could sometimes seem remote from reality and unaware of prime causes. The little fish did not move but lay as if in death upon the water/soup.

"Wake up, wake up, lazy little fish," reiterated the troll. His voice was louder than the sound of the tide that sloshed against the walls of his home. Once again he slapped the soup and presently the body of the fish drifted towards a small whirlpool into which the troll had the habit of throwing away the barnacles that attached themselves to his body when he was slumbering.

Slowly the body of the little fish started to turn in the eddy. "Oh, the little fish is probably dead," said the troll, temporarily forgetting that he was in Oz where dying is not as easily done as said. "Let him go with the barnacles."

But just as the troll started to resettle himself for sleep on and under the surface of the pool he saw the fish's body turning faster and faster in the rapid current. He happened to remember a promise he had made to his mother always to try to find beauty in the smallest and most insignificant of things. With a sudden gesture the ugliest troll scooped up the little fish from the soup's clutches and saved it from becoming chowder.

The troll brought it to his gigantic blubbery ear. "He's still alive?" he said, listening to the tiny heartbeat. Putting on his seashell glasses, he looked with care at the minute form which lay inert among the ridges of his palm.

Though so small it was the most beautiful fish that the ugliest troll had ever seen. It had a jeweled jasmine body and translucent apricot fins. Each black eyelid glistened like an onyx.

"What a treasure I have found," exclaimed the troll. "I shall put it inside the most beautiful shell there is in the entire sea."

He thereupon called to the deeps, which heard the troll on the voice of the wind. And the sea searched its depths for a shell fitting for the little fish and delivered it to the troll in a burst of froth and foam.

Taking the lidded shell and rinsing it in a fountain of clear amethyst water which flowed through a crack in the cavern wall, the ugliest troll gently laid the body of the little fish within. Then he commanded the wind to sing softly and so rouse the fish to wakening.

The wind sang of the breezes that stir the flowers and trees and carry the new seeds to the earth's bosom where they grow anew.

Behold, the limp body of the little fish began to stir and shortly the fish was moving gently around inside the big shell. The fish did not notice the ugly troll who was peering in at him absorbedly. Finally when he did look up he was not startled, for all he saw was the lovely reflection of himself in the mirror-like mother-of-pearl lining of the upper shell.

The ugliest troll gazed at the little fish and said, "Little fish, you are the most beautiful fish in the whole world." Now the little fish *was* startled, but when he looked up he could see nothing out in the gloom beyond the self-contained glow of the shell's nacre. All he could see was, verily, the most beautiful fish he had ever seen, brilliant in the gleam of the mother-of-pearl. This beautiful fish seemed to have the gruffest voice!

"Big fish, big fish, you are the most beautiful fish I have ever seen," said the little fish to his supposed brother. "I love you, big fish," concluded the smaller one.

At first, the troll was speechless. The words touched him inside. At last he got out: "I love you too, little fish."

The little fish then swished his tail and flopped about inside

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the shell, the big reflected fish seeming to imitate his actions.

The ugliest troll smiled for the first time. He appeared beautiful, as great salty tears rats down the furrows in his face and fogged his seashell glasses.

"This is the first time anybody has ever told me that," he said to the little fish.

"How strange," said the little fish, "for you are surely the most beautiful fish that has ever been."

C H A P T E R

S I X T E E N

Fattywiggins, still fumingly angry at the poor little fairy Peaseblossom, was kicking her heels in the anteroom to the presence chamber. People kept passing through in both directions but paying sorely little attention to her. She stalked about, munching an apple, and presently took up a position at the only window in the room. From there she looked down curiously to see the aged crone whom she had just noticed coming from the audience hall move about in the topiary garden as if in search of something.

Odd. What could she be looking for?

The garden was a cunningly wrought little enclave close under the palace wall and filling all of a courtyard. There a clever assistant of old Lucion, the head gardener, had given his fantasy free rein and, with consummate craftsmanship, clipped box shrubbery and yew trees into eight-foot-high figures of palace favorites: the Scarecrow, Nick Chopper, the Courageous Lion.

Fattywiggins watched as Mombi did something obscure at the foot of a green sculptured representation of the celebrated Dorothy Gale.

"Dorothy" sniffed Fattyw contemptuously. Ozma had frankly told the new favorite that missing Dorothy was the

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occasion for her taking unto herself a new protégée at the Palace of Magic. The Kansas girl and her aunt and uncle had borrowed Ozma's red wagon and the swift Sawhorse to make another of their periodic far-flung peregrinations of discovery about the land of Oz. They had been gone for many weeks. Fattywiggins didn't like to think about what would happen when they—that is, *she* returned.

The door to the outer hallway opened again. Fattyw turned idly to look. That good-looking guardsman. What was he wanting? The girl had to smile as she saw the fellow squat and look through the keyhole into the throne room. He quite ignored the room's other occupant. "When is she coming out?" she heard him mutter impatiently.

"What's up?" said F.W., breaking the spell.

Guardsman Langley started and stood up. "My sweetheart's in there. Serena the Sweetly Singing Seamstress. We haven't met in months and now it looks like she'll never get away from Her Highness who, I can see, is still talking to her nineteen to the dozen."

Fatty drew near, still holding in one hand the purloined letter, whose corner she had been using to pick her teeth after the consumption of the apple. As she too stooped to have a look Langley caught sight of. the green letter and stared.

When Fattywiggins withdrew her eye from the hole, no wiser than before, she grasped the direction of the guardsman's glance and at once said, "Langley, did you see anyone place this letter under the door while you've been on duty?"

"No, miss." The man looked a bit solemn and Fattyw wondered whether that was all he might have been able to say on the subject.

He did continue speaking a little. He asked politely if the young lady wished him to take the billet and deliver it to their sovereign. He had a pretty-shrewd idea that whoever had slipped the envelope under the door toad not intended it for the young English girl.

"Thanks," said Fats, "but I choose to give it to her myself."

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

It was not only fairies who of recent years had come in great numbers to Oz. Less immediately likable populations such as gnomes, kobolds, and trolls had also taken advantage of the general welcome to settle in the magical country. These were fay-folk thitherto virtually unknown there: trolls and kobolds absolutely and (g)nomes only so occasional intruders from more benighted regions beyond the encircling deserts.

Now all that was changed and the mischief-making goblins were disturbing the peace in a number of places. The trolls in particular gave cause for concern. For one thing, they were prolific. Localities that had formerly been troll-free now found the pests to be teeming. They liked to congregate in shanty towns that did nothing to embellish the landscape.

One such had sprung up near the wine-growing area that Fairy Lurline had chosen to queen it in. Naturally as soon as the trolls discovered that the outbuildings and cellars of the region contained inebriants there was no restraining them. This circumstance was now to play a part in a scene to be enacted.

As Lurline and her immediate circle perched among the vines discussing their hair-dos they were shaken by the sudden sound

and then sight of a gang of desperadoes.

"Move along," shouted a troll voice.

"Hurry up!" commanded another.

The voices grew louder and more painfully comprehensible. Something; about the tone and timbre warned the fairies to make themselves scarce. Their curiosity was of course too greatly aroused for them incontinently to make tracks. Instead they simply and quickly became invisible.

Now the fairies, agog, spied a party of five coming along the vine rows. Two of the number were bound and gagged, so how they managed to walk along on all fours was quite mysterious. Truth to tell, they weren't managing it very well, hence the exhortations from their captors. Awkwardly they blundered along an aisle of the grape yard

As the captives appeared to toe the line a little better the lead troll, one Numskul (Numskul P. Heddingtrousen, to give him his complete name), allowed himself to relax and even commented genially, "Won't it be wonderful to have bacon and eggs for breakfast again? Or think of ham-hocks and fritters for lunch!"

"Indeed," seconded a lieutenant. "This dearth of pork has been quite frightful."

"Why," exclaimed the third, "my wife might make us some pickled pigs' feet or pigs' knuckles." Roughly he jostled the two swine prisoners into line along the narrow path.

Numskul stopped drooling long enough to say, "Look at what we have here! Two luscious piggywigs. True, the smaller one won't serve for more at present than roast suckling-pig but we'll soon have her franked up to fattening for her pains. The other is already of a size to provide us meat for split-pea soup for a long time to come."

Hearing the grim words, the smaller of the two pigs fell down in a faint. Her sibling tripped over a vine root and joined her.

For lo! These were Caresso-Pigs, Wee and Nilnul (whose name was confusingly like that of his captor). All fans of Miss Fattywiggins will have marveled that thus far in our tale no

mention had been made of her inseparable favorites, the Caressos. This is due to the physical circumstance that when wise Queen Ozma got word of the near-extinction of the race of swine in her northern realm she requested and received leave of Miss F. to send the family of her chums there as colonists. Ozma had of course intended the pigs as heraldic beasts only. It was the Trolls who had jumped to wrong conclusions and when they ran across a couple of the Caressos out on a walking tour assumed they had been placed there as provender.

Now troll Numskul, noting the fall of the pigs, said, "We've been walking for quite a while now. I wonder if we'll make it home before nightfall."

"I too am pretty tired of walking," seconded his second. His name was Druid.

"Look!" cried Cheep, the third. "There's a barn just ahead. What if we stayed there for the night and went on with our prizes early in the morning?"

"That sounds good," concurred Numskul. He kicked Wee to her feet and urged Nilnul along at a faster pace.

The group passed on out of ear-range of the eavesdropping fairies, who, now that the coast was clear, turned on their fairy lights and glowed faintly in the gathering dusk. "Gosh," said Mustardseed, "weren't those trolls just the most ugly gnarled creatures you have ever seen!"

"It's easy to see what they've been up to," countered Mab indignantly. "They've abducted two of the new colonists the Oz ruler sent here to replenish the pig population of Gillikinland."

"Do you mean Princess Ozma?"

"That's the one."

"'Tis very grievous to be thought upon," declared Cobweb and forthwith quit thinking about it.

The consciences of the other fays were not so easily stilled. "Don't they know," cried Titania, outraged to a quivering pitch, "that any animal who can talk is a protected species in Oz?" Since all animals can talk in Oz, the scope was broad. "Such," went on the fairy, "are deemed out of bounds to anyone who

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might ordinarily eat him or her.”

Try telling that to jolly Joe King, Titania. He’d eat you (if you were a pig) quicker than you could recite the Declaration of Independence.

“It’s clear to me,” said Moth, “that the trolls, once they get these pigs back to their camp, plan to kill them both and devour them.”

“Well, ‘kill’,” put in Mab. “That’s rather going some, isn’t it? since no one can die in Oz.”

“Devour them anyway,” insisted Moth.

At this point Lurline decided to act, or at least get someone else to act. “Moth,” she spoke, “would you please spread the word and organize a band of our members to keep watch on the trolls and their prisoners tonight and subsequently to follow them in the morning back to their shanty town or wherever they’re going?”

“Well thought upon, your majesty,” praised Moth. “It shall be done, and right willingly.”

Saying this, the fairy took off. in an instant. Her aura could be seen as a soft firefly glow as she flitted here and there, gathering up outlying fairies. Soon they had formed a bright circle of lights that flickered and then was seen no more as they pursued the renegade trolls and their hapless captives.

Meanwhile the trolls had reached the aforementioned barn beyond the end of the vineyard rows. Numskul issued commands. “You two take our friends inside the barn. Keep careful guard over them. Above all, do not hear them plead, for they’re well-spoken and perhaps may move your hearts to pity if you mark them.”

“I warrant you, my chief,” said Druid. “Talkers are no good to us—except to eat.”

“Start a small fire. I’ll snatch us some food from the vines.” Numskul turned on his heel.

The other two trolls went into the storehouse, where they unceremoniously threw down their prisoners next to a towering row of casks that lined one wall. It was not long before they

had a fire going in an old brazier they found on the premises. Amidst the plenty about them they used a flagon of fine old cognac to encourage the flames.

Alas, this was not the only use they made of such flagons. When their captain returned he found he had been a numbskull indeed to delegate authority to such confederates. The two were lifting high cheering cups and toasting one another as they looked for something to use as a spit to toast one of their captives.

"You cretins," the boss defined them, slinging down a partly fractured and abandoned witty basket he had found and filled with luscious grapes. "Don't you know better than to drink on empty stomachs?"

"We were powerfully thirsty," complained Druid.

"Fill up your bellies with these," ordered the chief brusquely, indicating the grape clusters.

"I'd rather start on those." Here Druid gestured significantly at the two cowering pigs.

Cheep was more realistic and said, "They'd better eat—if they're not to be eaten. Have we got anything to feed them?"

"There's no corn or swill, if that's what you mean," someone replied, but the topic soon palled as a source of interest.

When the trolls had eaten their fill of grapes their leader allowed them to start on grapes in another form and soon many a bottle was empty. One by one the kidnappers fell asleep by the fire, and pig Wee, empty stomached and ignored, followed suit. Her brother Nilnul watched as the last embers burned out, then he too strove with troubled thoughts to take a nap.

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

As the two chemistasters, the wizard Diggs and his assistant Xavier Jaxon, descended the 708 steps of the Wizard's tower in the Palace of Magic, the older man reverted to a favorite topic. "My new method of determining horoscopes is going to revolutionize the way one goes about casting them," he vouchsafed.

"Oh really?" replied Xavier, who knew nothing about astrology and cared less.

"Yes," enthused the Wizard. "It's another of my improvements on existing systems," he stated. "It seemed to me that we might just flatly do away with a lot of the traditional charting if we simply thought circularly. The circle *is* the perfect shape," the wise man went on, "nature's favorite," he concluded, making the same wrong assumption as Aristotle and Ptolemy.

"Please explain, professor," said Xavier politely.

"If we arrange the twelve houses of the horoscope on the circumference of a 'circle,'" said the good old man, "like so—" He gestured widely in the air in so vivid a manner that Xavier Jaxon could *see* the circles and indeed was going round in them, as they went down the spiral staircase. "—why, then we could place each of the twelve houses equidistantly on the perimeter," concluded the Wizard triumphantly.

"So you said," admitted Jaxon. "In other words, one equals one: an equation that has never been known to fail."

"I am delighted to see that you follow my reasoning so exactly," praised Diggs.

"But tell me," pursued Jaxon, "do you here in Oz still believe in that nonsense?" His question rather curdled the spell a little.

Wizard Diggs had the patience of the true believer in the face of the infidel. He said, "The horoscope goes back hundreds of years, if not thousands. Though some people may not be willing to go to the length of swearing by the stars, there does seem to be a certain amount of validity to the teaching of the influence of the heavenly bodies. After all, the stars have been there so long! They surely would have to have *some* effect after a while. And don't forget those famous 'star-crossed' lovers, Romeo and Juliet."

Xavier Jaxon considered the celebrated pair for a moment but did not come to any clear conclusion, at least as bearing in any way upon the present conversation.

The Wizard was going on. "...and so Ozma has asked me to cast her horoscope in such a way as to look into her love life."

Xavier missed his footing and fell down a few steps. It was, indeed, as if worlds were colliding. Ozma? Love life? Even he, as a raw newcomer, knew that the two concepts were as good as irreconcilable. He didn't dare ask Diggs what in heaven's name he meant.

The savant was continuing blandly as if he had never dropped a conversational blockbuster. "If we place a wheel cut out of a circle in the center—"

"Circle of what? Center of what?" pleaded Xavier, trying to keep up.

But the Wizard was well away on his hobby horse and impervious to jibes. "...a place for each of the signs on the circumference of the wheel," he was going on, making sure that there should be no misapprehensions on *that* score, "then we place a fastener through the middle of the two—"

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"Two what?" thought the assistant but again failed to vocalize the doubt.

"—and we shall be able to spin the wheel, placing the sign in whatever house we should, according to the birth date. There, isn't that easy enough?" concluded Diggs, calmly confident.

Xavier J. was still making his way through the moods and tenses of the various previous utterances and did not reply at once. The Wizard didn't care and pursued. "Of course information regarding the signs and houses can then be placed [he loved that verb] inside and outside the circle." What a pity it were if it was not exactly understood where the houses were located. "That is, standard information regarding the quality of the stars, signs, et cetera,

"What time is it?" he suddenly asked. Apparently he had finished his out-loud thinking about his philosophy of the horoscope.

His assistant, who had fallen behind both in pace and in train of thought, muttered some reply. He was thinking, perhaps a little non-sequiturally, how close he and his mentor had become in the short time since his own arrival in Oz. It must be the Wizard's clever way of viewing things that made Xavier like him so much. Or could it be the challenge it so frequently seemed, to make out just what it was that O.Z. Diggs was on about?

The Wizard, the while, was reflecting on the wise thoughtfulness of the younger man in the face of his own cerebrations. Jaxon showed real astuteness in grasping the metaphysical aspects of any project he, Diggs, undertook. Not for him the waywardness of Fattywiggins, that other newcomer, who wanted to change everything in Oz to suit herself.

Diggs had, after all, to smile when he thought of the young girl whose charm had to compete with her ignorance and brashness. He glanced at his hand which carried the ingredients for what he thought of as a "small fun experiment" he would presently offer for the twelve-year-old's contemplation. The savant was holding regular science lessons for the youngster's benefit, for Fatty wasn't dumb, just impulsive.

By now the two men were before the doors of the ante-chamber to the Throne Room of the Girl Ruler. A small but expectant group of palace hangers-on were murmuring with excitement there.

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

The sea, which had been listening at the entrance to the grotto, roared with a great guffaw and the wind whistled at the foolishness of the little fish and the ugliest troll. The wind gossiped around the world to his brother winds, who in turn told all the little birds that the ugliest troll was in love with a little fish who thought the troll was a beautiful big fish. What capital confusion and mirth-making misunderstanding.

Soon the glades and meadows were rustling with the news of the ugliest troll and the little fish. They whispered to the insects, "How silly the little fish is! Why would such a beautiful big fish have such a very gruff voice?" they said.

And the insects hummed back, "How stupid the ugliest troll is, for all his knowledge and book learning. It's elementary physics. Can't he see that the little fish sees only his own magnified reflection?"

The flowers and the bees merely sneered to think that a troll and a fish could ever fall in love, even if by accident. "What can the world be coming to if a fish and a troll are lovers?" they asked.

The days passed and the ugly troll and the little fish lived together in paradise. The ugliest troll took to reading to the little

fish from his great volumes. His gruff voice began to sound half again as sweet as a siren's as he read out tales from The Arabian Nights, Greek myths, and the plays of Shakespeare and Rostand. They talked about all the deepest philosophical subjects, such as whether matter exists and who created the first god. They shared the arts. They divided all knowledge between them, and the understanding and friendship they knew were the greatest that could ever be achieved between two creatures of the deep barbaric sea and the wild sad shore .

The little fish told the troll of the experiences he had had in the kingdom of the deep. He claimed, although he was very young, to have served in the Legion of the Sea and fought in the Battle of Shroud Shale in which three thousand fish had engaged, to protect a school of minnows from an army of sharks. He showed the troll a scar on his fin to prove it. The little fish also boasted of having fallen in love with the prettiest she-fish on the Grand Banks, one who had won many prizes for her beauty.

"I'll bet you too must have been chased after by many a pretty fish," said the little swimmer.

"No," said the troll.

'That's very strange,' thought the little fish, but he did not think of expressing his thought to the big fish lest he hurt his feelings.

Presently the wind and the sea got into a heated argument concerning the ugly troll and the little fish.

"It's downright disgraceful for a creature of the sea like the little fish to live with the ugliest troll, who never thinks of swimming in my soup," said the Soup Sea.

"I on the other hand think it's perfectly delightful," said the wind. "You're just jealous because the ugliest troll uses my air and not your liquid."

"You have some nerve!" roared the sea.

Before long a storm was boiling. The sea frothed and the wind hissed. The tempest raged for days, incidentally tossing ships upon the rocks and washing billows over the dikes to flood fields and destroy crops. it was the worst argument the sea and

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the wind had ever had.

The ugliest troll, secure in his happiness, was indifferent to all the noise of the elements. He threw up his hand-fins in abandon and said, "The wind and sea are probably quarreling over something perfectly trivial." With that remark he slid down comfortably in his lagoon and plumped up the billows behind his head.

"Good night, little fish," he said to his companion from the depths of his seaweed mattress.

"Good night!" replied the fish and added saucily, "Don't let the barnacles bite."

But the little fish could not fall asleep.

He tossed and turned all night, only to realize far on in the wee hours that it was the sea and the wind that were tossing and turning him as the recoil from their tempestuous dispute ruffled even the surface of the normally quiet lagoon.

In lulls in the storm he could still hear the familiar rambles and snores of his friend, the big fish, who slept on undismayed, half in, half out of the soup. The little fish's own home shell rocked back and forth.

Finally at about five o'clock the storm climaxed. A last and most enormous wave broke through to wash into the cavern and overturn the iridescent mollusk shell where the little fish sought to vain to catch forty winks. With a splash he found himself swimming around in the lagoon itself, while the shell lay upside down, cracked and broken, against one wall.

For a bit the little fish remained, bewildered, but then realized that this accident was all to the good. Why should he have remained even so long inhabiting the shell, divorced from his pal, the big fish? He would find him now and they would set out together, separated no longer on the journey through life.

But search though he might he could not find the big fish anywhere. Even stranger, he could find no fish of any description, large or small, throughout the entrapped fluids of the sea cave. Nothing but a great hideous troll that lay snoring half in, half out of the lagoon.

Suddenly the little fish stopped in horror. That snoring! It was of exactly the timbre of the gruff voice of his friend, the big and beautiful fish. And all at once the terrible truth dawned on him.

He swam at once to a piece of the broken mollusk shell and observed how its convex shiny surface reflected and enlarged whatever appeared before it. How could he have been such a fool all these days and weeks?

The little fish sank to the bottom of the pool and lay there in shock. So it was all over then: the wonderful conversations, the reciprocal admiration, the interest and the charm and the variety of their society. All blown away because one of the loving pair had been in error about what the other one looked like.

And then as if from far off a tiny thought came to the after all not brainless little fish: a thought that grew in geometrical progression 'til it swelled and blew his mind. It was only *now* than he was being a fool! and stupid idiot.

Slowly he oscillated his fins, fluttered his gills, and drifted to the top of the pool. He had but a single thought: I must never let him know.

With just the faintest shudder, hastily suppressed, the little fish swam toward one gross ankle of the horrendous ugliest troll. He made a tentative dart at the exposed hide, recoiled, and then, returned to go about the task grimly.

Presently the nipping nibbling feeling at his foot wakened the slumbering troll. Startled, he looked down at his ankle and cried, "Hi! little fish! What are you doing there?"

The little fish turned. "Oh, hi," he said casually, "Just getting off some of these barnacles."

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

The outer doors of the antechamber were drawn back and O.Z. Diggs, closely followed by the scholarly-looking Xavier Jaxon, bustled in. "Aha!" cried the savant. "What have we here? Hatching a little plot, are you?"

Fattywiggins and Langley the guardsman did look a little conspiratorial as they stood close together near the opposite, inner doors.

"Why aren't you in the throne room with Princess Ozma, my dear Fats?" went on the Wizard jocularly.

"I'm in disgrace," stated the young girl near-formally. "I wasn't getting along all that well with one of those fairies Ozma has flying around."

"Arguing with a fairy will get you nowhere but in trouble," pontificated the Wizard. "They're always right—by definition."

"Bat what about you, dear professor?" Fattyw had picked up the appellative from her pal Xavier Jaxon, to whom she now nodded comradely. "Why aren't you with Ozma? and since way back. She's been waiting for you forever to sample that punch you sent in."

"Oh, goodness, yes, that punch!" cried Diggs and slapped his forehead. "I got carried away with other experiments. Xavier

will tell you as much. Now see here, for instance, what I've brought along for your science lesson today." Here the wise man held up a modest-sized jar containing a clear liquid.

"Oh, lessons," said Fattywiggins, deflated. "I don't feel much like lessons today."

"What's the matter?" Fatty had seen the flavorful cows and empty ice cream churn brought out and had divined her fate. "I think I've just missed out on some delicious ice cream. Besides, I ought to have been present as the Princess' official food taster. And now it looks like I'm going to miss sampling your famous punch—if they ever get around to bringing it back from the kitchen."

"Kitchen?" echoed the Wizard, and Fattywiggins told him about the decision to decant the beverage into a vessel more suitable for serving from on a queen's twenty-first birthday.

"But what have you got there?" the girl went on. "It looks like a glass of water with a string in it, attached to—is that a screw?"

"Take a taste of this solution," offered Diggs, while his assistant looked on with as much interest as Fattyw.

F.W. did as she was told. "Hmh, Just tastes like sugar water."

"Quite right! But a super-concentrated sugar water. Now watch." O.Z. pulled gently on the string and as it broke the surface of the syrupy liquid the spectators could see a series of chunky crystals clinging to it.

"Oh, wow," said Fattywiggins, containing her excitement. "I'll bet you those are sugar crystals."

"Just so. This is the way we make what is known as rock candy. There you have your little science lesson for the day. Actually the demonstration was suggested to me by a larger research trial I've been conducting in the laboratory. Xavier here will confirm I got deeply involved. That's what made me late for the punch-tasting."

"What research was that, professor?" asked Fattywiggins, getting interested in spite of herself. Before she could have her answer, however, there was a commotion at the outer doors and

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guardsman Langley let in a deputation from the kitchens. They came through bearing on a great silver tray the ceremonial punch bowl.

The Wizard and his assistant stood back to let the procession pass but Fatty, ever curious, went to meet the group and tagged along, muttering to herself, "They're still in there," as she peered deep into the great green-filled diamond bowl. She watched the doors to the throne room drawn back and the party pass within.

Wizard Diggs, wound up in the fascination of his subject, was continuing, "Precious stones are formed in just the same way as rock candy, Fatty. It just takes a little longer... well, a lot longer. That's the worst of jewels and the factor that makes them so sought-after; it takes such ages to produce them. But it remains simply a matter of accumulation of crystals."

"What was the experiment?" asked the child, turning her attention back to the Wizard and the topic.

"In my researches I've come up with a method of harnessing lightning. That's pure concentrated electricity, you know. To cut a long, and absorbing, story short, I found that by introducing supercondensed electricity into a mineral solution I could produce, for example, emeralds in a millionth of the time it takes nature to do it. Great big gorgeous crystals, at that; far larger than are ever produced in nature. There's just one tiresome side effect—"

"Oh? What's that?" put in Xavier Jaxon.

"Such jewels and the salt solution they come from, thus impregnated with electricity, are a violent poison—at least to the human constitution. Great Scot! Fattywiggins, what's the matter?"

The little girl had gone all pale. Without a word of reply she bolted to the doors to the audience hall, tore one open, and rushed screaming toward the throne. Thither Princess Oz had retreated, followed by Serena and a number of the courtiers who still remained in the hall. The tray supporting the punch bowl had been balanced on the taboret, and the girl ruler was in the

very act of carrying to her lips the diamond dipper.

"Stop! Stop!" shrieked the fat heroine, raced to her sovereign, and struck the dipper from her hand. The implement flew to the floor and splashed poisonous green in all directions. "Don't drink, Ozma!" Fatty raved on. "That's deadly poison! And not just to look at either!"

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

The fairy vigilantes led by Moth waited until the brazier fire in the barn had at last winked out before flying up into the rafters to keep watch over the fortunes of the prisoner pigs. They were not to report back to queen Lurline until they had seen whither the kidnap party would make its way in the morning.

The sprites who had remained in the vineyard were exercised to get the crimping blocks out of their hair and the released tresses combed and packed away in hair nets before it should be quite too dark to see what they were doing. They were thus engaged when envoy Peaseblossom made her appearance on her return from the court of the anniversing Ozma, queen of Oz.

Peaseblossom was in high dudgeon, still irate at the treatment she had received at the hands, and, alas, other parts of the body, of the presumptuous Fattywiggins, favorite and familiar of the popular princess. The fairy needed no urging to tell everybody what had happened, right on to the ignominious retreat before the looming thighs and beetling buttocks of the young girl.

"But what hurt most of all," wept Peaseblossom, calling the roll of the indignities she had suffered at court, "was her having

the nerve to imply that our gift was not all it should have been. She actually had the temerity to grouse because one of the hard centers broke her tooth. But that was just the point of it all, and everyone enjoyed the jape enormously."

"Well, I should hope so," sympathized Lurline. "The emeralds were a surprise treat and a most valuable gift at the same time. I hope Ozma understood that they were of the highest carat rating. But did she do nothing to chastise the overweening Fattywiggins?"

"I didn't stay to see," replied Peaseblossom. "But is it likely? The woman seems besotted with the young interloper. I can't think why."

"Oh, that's easy, Pease dear," stated Lurline nonchalantly. "From what I've seen, and I've been at Ozma's court a time or two, the girl ruler has a strong need for intimates of her own (apparent) age and (current) sex, and with Dorothy Gale off on that long expedition with her relatives, I suppose Ozma grasps at straws—"

"She's caught a straw this time all right," put in Peaseblossom spitefully, "—although the shape doesn't jibe."

"We can only hope the Princess soon finds some alternative girls to love[§]," said Lurline piously.

After that there remained little to be said, as, with assistance, Lurline drew from her hair the vine tendrils she had employed to produce lovely pipe curls. Soon the band of immortals had settled down to listen to a bedtime story told by Mustardseed in a singsong voice sufficiently lulling.

But Queen Lurline rose before the break of day. She wanted to check with Moth as to the hoped-for well-being of the captive Caresso-Pigs they had seen carried into durance the evening before. Then she wished to put into effect a plan she had conceived that same evening, one suggested in fact by the very story Mustardseed had soothed them to sleep with: that of unaccountably very *kind* trolls.

§ It's all right. Help is on the way. See *Tik-Tok of Oz* and *The Scarecrow of Oz*. Editor's note.

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

The arrival of the Wizard of Oz in Princess Ozma's throne room to sample the punch! It was second only to Tosca's singing of "Visst d'arte" among interminably put-off events.

In the event the scene was greatly different from what those present might earlier have anticipated. The Wizard was doing some fast self-exculpation. "I'm extremely sorry, your majesty," Diggs apologized profusely. "I had no idea that you were in fact waiting for me before sampling the punch. I *had* meant to be present but I got wrapped up in experimentation with beryllium and aluminum salts and did not watch the time. However, I did succeed in bringing off an enormously accelerated production of emerald crystals, as you see here. But what I can't at all account for is how the salts bath got *here*. I must say it does rather resemble that harmless seamint-flavored drink we sent down earlier. What do you suppose...?"

Further commotions at the doors to the anteroom and the outer hallway, which had all been left open in the excitement. A number of the court celebrities led in the frightened cook and chef de cuisine, together with a ragtag of waiters and scullery maids. These were ranged before the throne and there they stood and trembled.

Ozma looked grave and spoke very quietly. "It seems, then, that we have been served a poisoned drink for our delectation. May I enquire..." She left her question uncompleted, recoiling from the enunciation of an accusation of attempted murder.

Chef Etum Uppe spoke for his co-workers. "I of course took no part in the search, being concerned with a perusal of accounts in the butler's pantry, but as I can learn the kitchen staff could not find the diamond punch bowl ordained by Your Grace for serving of the beverage. An hour or more was lost in fruitless ransacking of every cupboard and cabinet. Finally in desperation the entire corps of servants fanned out through the palace. Only then did the vessel come to light, resting, of all places, on the corridor floor in the good Wizard's tower, and filled with this liquid as you see it now. How it came there no one knew but no time was lost in transporting it down to ground level and presenting it here. More I, or any of my staff, cannot relate."

"How very strange," observed the girl ruler. "But tell me: what happened to the original, and harmless, green liquor which was first introduced here? I know it was carried to the kitchens."

"That too is indeed peculiar, your highness. It has disappeared. Probably tipped away, I should suppose. And the odd tureen which had contained it —"

"One of my mixing vats," put in Wizard Diggs.

"Just so." Chef Uppe continued, "It was discovered behind a door in the root cellar when the alarm was sounded about the disastrous mix-up here. Empty, of course."

Ozma pursued the matter to the extent of asking if any individual could be suspected of having made the change. No one could conceive of anything so frightful being attempted by anyone within or near the Palace of Magic.

"Well, then," the Princess went on, "was anyone at all even seen in the kitchen regions who had no clear reason to be there?"

Here the jolly cook Fregosa put in a word, "Oh, Your Majesty, everyone has always been welcome for a between-meals

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bite in the kitchen. The footmen regularly bring visitors there who don't get offered something at audiences and the like. I myself noticed a Gillikin farmer with his cows in the dairy cellar today —"

"And I an old woman in a purple cloak," recalled the chef.

"And then our guardsmen friends and the cleaning staff and the Kapellmeister, and... Wasn't even Miss Fatty in at one point?" the cook asked, smoothing her apron nervously at her own temerity.

"Definitely," confirmed the young heroine. "I'd just been kicked out of the Presence and was hating everything. I went down to the kitchen to comfort myself with apples."

"Did you find any, Fatty?" put in the Wizard whimsically.

"Well, yes, I did. There was a nice little bushel basket of them. But the point is, I certainly didn't do any switching of green liquids."

"Nobody suspects you, dearest," quoth Ozma. "Especially since it was you who sounded the alarm. At least, I would never imagine you putting anyone in danger only to make points by rescuing her from it later on."

Fattywiggins just grinned. Anyway she was back in her dear sovereign's good graces with a vengeance.

Now at last Ozma was free to leave the presence chamber after the most exhausting reception she could ever remember having held. But the thoughtful Girl Ruler had not thrown off the sense of ill omen she had labored under all the morning. Some one *had* tried to poison her. Or rather, it was subtler than that.

Everyone at court, and indeed everyone in Oz, knew that she, Ozma, was a fairy and an immortal. Poisons could have no effect upon her. But who, in any case, and under normal conditions, would be the one first to taste whatever might be served to the Queen of Oz?

Why, Miss Fattywiggins, her official taster.

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

Very quietly Queen Lurline went about her morning toilet. First she folded neatly the gossamer blanket she had worn for sleeping, cocoon-fashion, in a curled grape leaf. Fresh dew lay over everything and she took up a kingcupful to bathe her face and sprinkle some moisture over her hair, which, she saw reflected in a dewdrop, still looked gorgeous from the day before.

Next she preened her wings with the dried but still sufficiently feathery antenna from a defunct butterfly. (Such equipment was shipped in from abroad where, alas, butterflies were still capable of dying.) Soon her pinions gleamed with their accustomed iridescence and the intricate chequer pattern stood out clearly.

She was rather hoping that Moth or one of the latter's lieutenants would put in an appearance quickly, now that morning had come. She waited a little while, stuck a straw in a plump grape, and drank her breakfast.

She looked at her watch. This was no good. She must be off. She was tempted to wake someone to tell where she was bound but decided her followers needed their sleep and anyway she didn't intend taking them with her. With a last drag on the juice

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straw she spread her wings and oscillated her antennae. Vibrations were caught from the direction in which Moth had betaken herself, and Lurline flew off silently thither.

Yea, there they were, the group of captors and captives trailing drearily along a minor branch of the road of puce bricks. Some distance in their rear hovered a cloud of fairies flying look-out. Lurline met them on a patch of magenta dandelions going to seed and gave them their instructions.

"Myself," she intimated, "I'm off to look up a certain 'Ugliest Troll'. From what I hear of him he might be helpful in bringing about a rapprochement in what I sense as a growing rivalry among Oz tribes. The trolls and the pigs, for instance, ought to be like blood brothers, yet here we find the ones trying to sell the others into slavery, if not worse."

"It's all the fault of these wretched trolls, wanting to introduce capitalism into Oz economy," complained Moth. She had heard the trolls' drunken conversation the night before and knew that the ugly creatures not only looked but did ugly. Used to operating on a market economy within their own society they were determined to foist the shabby system on the whole of their new fosterland. The result could not help but bring grief and desolation for the hapless ones the regimen would affect—and a couple of caresso-pigs were among the first victims.

"Oh, fays!" exclaimed Lurline. "The next thing you know labor unions will be raising their dreadful heads." Little did she in fact suspect!

But for now there were more important things to be considered. Lurline sent a committee of the troll-followers to alert princess Ozma, Sorceress Glinda, and others in authority as to the local situation. Others were told off to persevere in surveillance over the kidnap party. Herself, she flew away, toute seule, toward the east, there to seek the grotto of the Ugliest Troll.

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

Fattywiggins was proving once again her right to the use of the syllable “fat”. She was not only fat but fatuous. Indeed, some persons conversant with arcanities of language and linguistics suspected that in the shortened form of her name often used, “Fattyw”, the ‘W’ had its value as in Welsh, and the epithet amounted in fact to an abbreviation of just that word “fatuous”.

For what could be more ‘vacantly silly, purposeless, and idiotic’ than an insistence upon the use of roller skates on the staircases and across the inlaid marble floors of the Palace of Magic.

“Hey, look at me! Look what I can do!” Fatty was yelling at this very moment as she sought to catch the attention of Queen Ozma and the Wizard on the south terrace of the palace. Down she swooped along a ramp leading from that venue of strolling or tea-drinking. In her desire and pursuit of an audience she paid more attention to her spectators than to where she was going. She reaped the full reward of her inattention by flying off the end of the ramp, supranavigating three yards of shrubbery, and crashing down on the barrow of a harmless vendor of maple syrup who stood on the side walk. It was a case of mass over maple-cart.

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"Oh, well done, Fattyw!" cried queen and courtier from the balustrade above and gave the little lady a big hand.

"I couldn't have done better myself," added Wizard Diggs, "if as well."

Silently F.W. withdrew her thigh from the syrup barrel, gave the peddler *one look*, and stalked off, her skates dragging from their straps.

Fattywiggins had not come unprovisioned. In the pocket of her gingham skirt she had a supply of poison-pen letters, an essay on aesthetics she had been writing, and the famous green envelope that had been slipped under the door of Ozma's audience chamber yesterday. This last, when in her angry mood, Fattyw had kept concealed from its supposed rightful recipient. Without grounds she imagined it to contain incriminating evidence of hole-and-corner romantic exploits by her protector. (Fats' pal, Xavier Jaxon, had blabbed about the Wizard's mind-boggling reference to the fairy princess' "love life" as revealed in the horoscope.)

On the other hand, she had reflected grudgingly, there was just the chance that Ozma was innocent of wrongdoing (as any entanglement of the heart on the part of an unwed female regent would naturally be regarded in Oz). The letter might be the product of a one-sided affair, providing slight gratification to the writer and none to the addressee. To guard against the realization of any such deflating denouement for the nonce, Fatty had not yet opened the envelope.

Now she called disgruntledly up to the balcony, "Mail for you, your grace," and waited while Ozma came down the steps to her. She had some idea of pretending she had fast come across the billet in the maple barrow or elsewhere but in the end, with scant grace, merely muttered, "I forgot to give it to you."

"What could this be?" said the Princess.

"Search me. Just an old letter." In fact, the heart-shaped seal on the flap made Fats think the missive was not routine, but she devoted only a moment to the reflection before directing her steps to a drained and dry fountain basin where she was going

to essay her next star turn.

As Ozma, back on the terrace, opened her letter, the Wizard twirled the zodiac Wheel that Xavier Jaxon had constructed to the Professor's specifications. Diggs had been casting his queen's horoscope with a particular view to her erotic destiny and comparing it with the love line in her palm. Frustratingly the latter appeared long but diffuse and the horoscope reading revealed that Ozma's deepest love was directed only at her people in general.

The princess moved to a table overlooking the fountain basin, sat down, and read the letter, the Wizard eyeing her dubiously. When she had done she silently passed the missive across to her adviser.

"It's signed 'An admirer of Princess Ozma'," he constated.

"Yes, I know," assented the ruler. "What do you suppose it means?"

"It doesn't make too much sense, does it?"

"Why would someone send me something like that?" pursued the girl.

"I don't know. Maybe it's just some crank poet trying to get a bit of extracurricular recognition by addressing his effusions to crowned heads."

"Oh." This was a new idea for the princess. "You think that's intended as a poem, do you? I mean, it doesn't rhyme or have any metre or make sense or anything."

The Wizard laughed delightedly. "Oh, dear me, your grace, if you'll forgive me, you're woefully behind the times. Nowadays a 'poem' doesn't require to have anything that sets it apart from, let alone above, any other piece of writing. It's all a matter of typography. Take any arbitrary collection of words, print them in very short lines, and you've got a poem."

This discussion had gone on far beyond the limits of Fattywiggins' patience as a non-center of attraction. She was standing in the middle of the dry fountain basin with her skates on her feet and her fists on her hips. "Hey!" she screamed. "Look at me!"

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Queen and wizard dutifully turned their heads. "Okay? I'm ready!" the clamor went on. "Watch me now, everyone!"

The couple moved to the terrace railing. It was too much to expect that Fattyw would come a cropper twice running—or rather, skating—but they didn't want to miss it if she did. Ozma crossed her fingers as she called back, "You be careful now."

Fatty took a running start, skated up the sloping side of the basin, turned, and rushed down again toward the opposite side of the fountain. Here she twisted to the left and in a counter-clockwise move flew up another side of the basin, steering her body weight in all directions just in case one of them should be right. In a few seconds she had sailed to the rim of the fountain.

Next she sped back clockwise, roared round to the other side, gained the right lip of the basin, collected all her weight—and that was considerable—and launched herself through the air. Incontinently she disappeared beyond the fountain rim.

There was a silence, followed presently by a sound of crying, down behind the fountain. "Oh, dear," murmured Ozma.

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

The careful reader will not have been entirely satisfied by the explanation attempted palmed off in chapter seventeen as to how it came about that Miss Fattywiggins had been separated from her alter egos, the Caresso-Pigs. There it was stated that they had been sent to replenish the population in Gillikinland of that land's heraldic beasts. That was only partially correct, accounting for why they had gone to the purple country rather than another.

But why were they suffered to be sent away at all? There had been pigs in every direction round the young heroine when first she came to Oz.[§] The true rationale is more complex and had to do with the belief of Queen Ozma in a prophecy (conceivably false) that an animal or animals, probably domestic, might compass her downfall or, at least, a serious defeat. The result had been a gradual distancing of the little ruler from *all* her earlier animal intimates. Not that she suspected for a moment that the Courageous ("Cowardly") Lion, say, or the Woozy, would himself, deliberately, do her any harm, but that he—or some possible she—could be the inadvertent agent of a disaster.

§ See again, *Fattywiggins & The Caresso-Pigs in Oz*. Editor's note.

The upshot was that the Lion and his pal, the Hungry Tiger, had been given indefinite leave to go rule, and assistant-rule, the Lion's Animal Kingdom. The Woozy, together with those palace pets, the Pink Kitten and the China Dog, had been politely exiled.[§] Even the tried and true Sawhorse was on leave of absence to haul Dorothy Gale and her relatives around Oz.

As for the caresso-pigs—*and* the Wizard's nine tiny piglets (even including Ozma's own favorite, Pigmy)—they had all answered the call when advice came from Sorceress Glinda that swine colonists were wanted in Gillikinland. Of course! they were given assurance that they would not end up in ovens. (Some other, anonymous, pigs, if such could be found, might suffer that fate.)

So now we find the caresso-pigs having the time of their lives, living happily together not far from the hut residence of the once wicked (but now apparently trying-to-go-straight) witch Mombi in the shadow of the Gillikin Mountains.

Well, they *had* been living happily together. Now it seemed that the case was altered, for here are Biff and Cleo sitting upon the curbstone of the road of lilac bricks where it passed in front of their house and each crying into a large handkerchief. Occasionally one or both would stop to blow his or her snout.

It was obvious that word of the abduction of their brother and sister had reached the family home of the Caresso-pigs.

"We shall never see them any more," moaned Biff. "Poor Nilnul; poor Wee," wept Cleo,

"They were such a good brother and sister," continued Biff. "If I had been there I would have seen that nothing bad happened to them."

"Wee is too tiny to have done anyone any harm," sobbed Cleo.

As the two continued their litany of praise and grief for the missing siblings a solitary figure approached them. It was Mombi, returning from her sojourn in the Emerald City where she had presented the powerful eggs to Princess Ozma. She was

§ See *The Pink Kitten in Oz*. Editor's note.

tired and was moving along the road slowly, looking around every once in a while to avoid any repetition of her encounter with the crazy unicyclists who frequented this newest of Oz roads.

The witch came up to where Biff and Cleo were weeping. In her new mild mood Mombi was not unsympathetic to people, or pigs, in tears.

"What are you little creatures crying about?" she enquired. "Did someone snatch your ball away? Or have your mother and father been punishing you?"

"Neither," said Biff.

"We have no mother or father," stated Cleo, still sobbing. "It's the wicked Norreganes. They've followed us to Oz and now it seems they've caught up with Wee and Nilnul. They were on a walking tour."

Biff objected. "I've told you and told you; it's not the Norreganes who have taken our brother and sister away, but rather the Trolls."

"Oh, you think it was the trolls, do you, Mr. Pig?" said Mombi sympathetically.

"Definitely. *You* wouldn't have seen them anywhere, would you?"

"Oh, no, I'm coming from the other direction. You did say 'trolls'? and of course they hang out farther on up in the north."

Brother and sister wept on until Mombi herself had to observe the amenities. "Shall we go inside? And might an old lady ask for a drink of water?"

The pigs put a period to their puling, rose silently, and gestured Mom in through the gate. Biff went to the well and took a ladleful of water from the bucket.

The rest of the family of swine seemed to be taking the disappearance of their relatives in stride. They were playing some sort of game on the lawn and Mombi watched.

She had heard of pigs employed to hunt truffles and this seemed to be a variation on that theme. Pigs were everywhere in the garden, scrambling to and fro, running along, snouts to

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the ground, and stopping frequently to root small purple objects out of the damp soil.

"Another!"

"Here's another amethyst!"

"Now I've got twelve!"

"I've found thirteen!"

One pig paused in its search and said confidentially to Mombi, "Isn't it amusing? All the pebbles in the country appear to have turned into amethysts!"

"That's new," agreed the witch. "But if amethysts are that common, why are you gathering them so feverishly?"

The pig eyed Mombi critically. "They're just as lovely as before even if they are common," and it went back to its truffling.

Even as the witch sipped and watched, two of the swine left the game and went into the house. It was Suze and Lazlodes. As Suze put a cauldron of water over the kitchen fire Lazlodes sat on his haunches on the floor and with his fat foothands stripped the husks from plump corn ears. Suze threw them into the soon boiling pot.

Presently, "I think we have as many ears as this old thing is going to hold," said Suze, but when she saw Mombi at the door she forced in two additional purple cobs. "Always enough for one more," she said welcomingly.

"That's kind of you," said the witch and she sucked the last drop of water from the ladle. "I don't think I'd have made it the rest of the way without something to eat."

Lazlodes only grunted, as he nosed the corn husks into a heap to presently go on the fire. But Suze smiled and said, "Of course"; the visitor was welcome to join the family for what was admittedly to be a corny meal.

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

"May I read the letter?" Fattywiggins enquired when they had bandaged her knees and knuckles

"I suppose there is no harm in your doing so," assented Ozma.

Fatty opened the squib and perused it. It went:

"I'm expectant.

We're expectant.

No, I'm not talking about

Motherhood

Nor paternity.

This is a neuter condition,

Sometimes temporary.

Sometimes seems forever.

Just expectancy!

Sometimes anticipation

To the point of evoking

Thought-provoking

Perspiration.

Expectant but with no indication

As to when there might be a halt

To its duration

Of endless wanted time.
My anxiety
Can only be matched by my expectancy,
My expectancy exasperates my anxiety,
And when anxiety exacerbates
My exasperation...
Well, you know how I feel
Because of the hum of activity
Circumscribing my expectancy
Whether real or imagined.
Expectancy!
Expectancy!"

Fattywiggins did not know what to make of the poem. It was strange and it did not make very much sense. What was the person anxious about? Of what expectant? And who was the person?

Princess Ozma could be said to be anxious. She was anxious to please all her subjects by her wise rule and unfailing good spirits, but it was beyond reason that she could have written the poem letter to herself. Her subjects in turn were expectant but only of having a good time at the upcoming birthday festivities.

The girl ruler looked pensive. Fattyw misinterpreted her glance as indicative of a desire to carry on with the consideration of literary effusions. Hastily F.W. drew from her pocket her essay, licked the syrup from it, and handed it across.

"The Beauty of Telegraph and Telephone Poles" read Ozma. But she didn't want to spend time on the rest of the essay. Instead, rather too obviously, she turned the conversation.

"Do you suppose those eggs the old woman gave me will do what she said?"

"It's against all scientific probability," pronounced the Wizard. "By the way, what did she say they'd do?"

"She didn't. But she said they were to be awed in the contest with the Purpleys, who, or which, are on the increase. Tell me, O.Z., do you think it's getting purpler around here?"

Diggs looked about him. "Now that you mention it, my dear

Princess, it does strike me that the air, if anything, is faintly more lavender than heretofore."

"I suppose that's it then. And the eggs are somehow to be made use of in curing the condition. But I can't for the life of me think how."

"The people are getting purpler," put in Fattyw, looking up from nursing her knee.

"What do you mean, Fatty?" Ozma wanted to know.

"Well, most of the ones who put in to see you yesterday were from Gillikinland. And when you walk, or skate, around town you notice at least half the people are dressed in violet, not green."

The Wizard patted her head and said, "Observant child."

"I suppose," said Ozma with a sigh, "I must get busy doing something about it. I'd have thought Glinda would be able to cope but—"

Diggs broke in, begging his Queen's pardon. "The great sorceress has been consulted?"

"Oh, I naturally put in a call to her immediately after yesterday's audience." Ozma shook her lawn sleeve and flashed her two-way wrist radio significantly. "It turns out the Good Witch has known about the condition for weeks, if not months, and has been taking measures. Not that they seem to have done much good. She's alerted all the fairies in Gillikinland and would you believe it? The great Lurline herself has taken a sabbatical and is personally keeping a watching brief on developments up there. Funny—" The Girl Ruler paused suddenly.

O.Z. Diggs and Fattywiggins glanced with attention at their startled sovereign. Their questions were implicit.

"I just happened to think. What do you suppose it means? Peaseblossom was dressed all in heliotrope yesterday! And remember those chocolates?"

The question was rhetorical but Fats answered it. "How could I forget?" and the girl switched a hand from nursing her knee to nursing her jaw.

"They were all violet too, except for the specifically emerald

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centers. You don't suppose—" The Queen looked alarmed. "that instead of Lurline and her bunch fighting the Purpleys they've joined them?!"

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

It was true: Queen Lurline and her entire fairy band, all of them who were in Gillikinland anyway, had gone all purple, and almost without realizing it. That's the way purplitude takes you. Once you've been attacked, you don't even know it; you've become a purpley yourself and thenceforward work for the hegemony of purpleness without remembering that at one time you may have had reservations against it. Lurline's efforts in opposition to the purple scourge had resulted in one significant act which in time would have important results, but after that the fairies did nothing more against the prevailing pervasion. All they remembered now was that they were supposed to make Gillikinland safe for swine.

To that end the fairy Queen now grasped at straws. She had heard that there was at least one nice Troll; Mustardseed assured her that the story was true. Now she wanted to know how he got that way. In order to find out she winged it over the deep damp purple forests of Gillikinland toward a certain sea.

Her flight was not far but there were few landmarks to guide her. She wondered if she would have difficulty in finding it, but she need not have worried. The Soup Sea is always shown much too small on the more familiar maps. In fact it rivals in size, if it

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does not surpass, the great Inland Sea far over near the Winkie border.

Lurline was just imagining she could make out down below the path leading to the opening into the underground Illumi Nation when the salty expanse of the Soup gleamed on her sight to the south. As she flew nearer, the sea presented a strange appearance.

Its prevailing hue was purple, of course, but where its various constituents were principally one or another ingredient it took on the natural coloring of that component. Tomato Bay was purply-red, Pea Pond was greenish, and Oxtail Inlet a rich brown.

The fairy flew lower, searching out those cliffs under which she supposed the grotto of the Ugliest Troll to lie. And there they were! A headland that stood out significantly between Bouillon Bay and Consommé Cove at the deepest part of the Gulf of Gazpacho.

But how to get in? The queen-sprite could just make out a shallow arch that seemed to promise an opening under the base of the cliff, but even it was only revealed when the sloshing billows receded prior to dashing once more against the cliff.

Oh, well, nothing for it; she held her nose and took a one-armed header into the tepid liquid. Once well and truly dunked, Lurline struck out with arms and wings and soon popped up like a crouton on the surface of the soup inside the seacave.

The fairy dashed the broth from her eyes and looked about her. A soft violet light pervaded the cavern. There were the serried ranks of books, bound in the skins of defunct sea creatures, just as she had heard described. Yes, and there on a rock-cake, conveniently low, reclined the most dreadful-looking creature one could well imagine.

The long slimy hairy furrowed figure seemed to be holding forth, with occasional references to an open volume supported between its flipper fins, to a little jasmine-and-apricot fish that gaped from the soups of the grotto lagoon. Lurline heard the words "...where love reigned supreme." She was caught and listened on, quickly making herself invisible so as not to

distract the speaker from his(?) period.

Waving vaguely in the direction of the inmost wall of the grotto, the ugliest Troll (yes, it was he) read out:

"There, in a cavern passage, something unique is commemorated. For lo, it is there that is deposited the wonderful crown of Love and Wisdom of Oz, said to be the prerogative of the true ruler of the land but only to come to him or her when his dealings have deserved the jewel and his wit has claimed it.

"Now the resting place of the Crown is beautiful. It is formed all of gold, hyacinthine, and mother of pearl." The troll nodded knowingly, almost as if he had been witness of the fair site. "But the surroundings pale in comparison with the diadem itself. What words can describe the perfection of the intaglios that shape the—

"That's funny," the troll broke off. "It's printed 'emeralds' but that's crossed out and someone has written in 'amethysts'. It wasn't me!"

"Never mind. Go on," said the little black-eyed fish.

"Each is carved in the shape of a heart and these represent love, while alternating are scrolls of gold and these stand for wisdom. Each heart is pierced by an arrow representing suffering and each scroll is sealed with a pearl signet for endeavor. Within, the crown is lined with—again 'emerald' erased and 'amethyst' substituted—lined with amethyst velvety embellished with ermine..."

"Sounds quite magnificent," said the little fish.

"It is," assured the Ugliest Troll.

"You've seen it then?" cried the fish.

The troll put a flipper finger to what in him approximated to lips and read on, "It is not known to the world outside where the Crown is kept, for this is the great secret and mystery surrounding the Crown of Love and Wisdom. Of it has been truly said: you have only to see it once for instantly to forget it—"

"Wait a minute," demanded the little fish. "If nobody can remember it, how can you read out from a book about it?"

"Oh, easy," dismissed the troll. "The author—" He flipped

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to-the front pages of the sharkskin-bound volume. "G. Theurgist, M.M.—"

'Godfrey!' exclaimed the eavesdropping fairy to herself. 'Has he been here?'

"—was actually looking at the display when he wrote down the description. Once in writing, that doesn't disappear as does memory of the crown itself."

"Hm," said the fish, not fully convinced. "You read, 'It's not known where the Crown is kept,' but the author must have known if he was looking at it."

He put his fins on his hips (or nearest approximation) triumphantly.

"Undoubtedly he did," replied the troll unruffled, "but he wasn't telling. If he did, all the world and his wife would be beating a path to its door, wanting to melt it down for its costly constituents." Here the troll revealed his essential troll mentality. No other race in Oz would think of wanting to turn a beautiful symbol of majesty into articles of barter.

The troll continued the recitation. "When the Crown is found this is almost always by accident. Then it is well to be provided with knowledge of the ritual to be enacted in order to release the ineffable power of the jewel. Curiously, this information, once acquired, is not automatically lost to memory.

"The method is as follows:

"Upon a large hard flat surface sprinkle a jot of fairy dust—"

Here Lurline put a hand to her pocket but withdrew it hurriedly. Whatever fairy dust she had with her was for the nonce swimming.

"Dram upon the dust a circle nine palms in diameter and, in the center, a pentacle. Along the circumference of the circle distribute fifteen candles of myrtle wax, of even length and standing evenly apart. Light them with an Indian taper and when they burn reach across to inscribe the Rune of Power within the pentacle..."

Queen Lurline was trying. to memorize furiously. It all

sounded most intriguing. How strange that *she*, queen of all the fairies, had never heard of the wonderful Crown of Love and Wisdom. 'But no, silly!' she said to herself. 'It wasn't strange at all.' As she had just heard, it was in the nature of the thing that it could not be remembered. But if she was not going to be able to remember about the crown, at least she'd try to keep in mind what to do if she ever should run against it.

Meanwhile she had business with that troll.

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

“Oh, look,” spoke Ozma and pointed down to the garden patio beyond the now refilling fountain basin. “Cool drinks are being served. Let’s go and have one.”

Servants were carrying out the afternoon refreshment and depositing it on a beach table shaded by a giant flower-patterned umbrella. Even from the distance of the terrace one could make out lemonade with strawberries floating on top and a pitcher of iced tea with lemon slices. If eyes were not deceived there were also little tarts which closer acquaintance revealed to be filled with blueberries, raspberries, and further strawberries.

When she had taken her seat under the umbrella, Princess Ozma had off her coronet and placed it conveniently at hand on the table. (It had a tendency to fall off when she tilted back her head to drink.)

“Oh, you fellows,” she remarked to the ex-throneroom doorkeepers, Draxton and Lapstart, who were doubling today as waiters, perhaps in the expectation that they could do that less embarrassingly than they doorkept. “Please remain,” said the princess.

Tenderhearted as she was, she was having qualms since having had to have the two employees on the carpet, or, rather,

on the lawn, the previous afternoon. She told them then that it just wouldn't do to cough, roll one's eyes, or stick out the tongue while guarding the doors of the audience chamber. Did they think they might do better with employment in some less conspicuous part of the palace complex?

Lapstart had said they might shovel coal in the cellars but Draxton objected that that would make him cough worse than ever. It would be better if they could work outdoors. In the end and with misgivings the girl ruler put them on probation, serving at garden parties.

Now she wanted to make up to them for having been annoyed and she invited them to join her guests—just this once—at the refreshment board. In fact, she had an aim to accomplish and thought to kill two birds—etc.

From her sleeve she drew the licked-dry but still faintly sticky green letter and asked of the feckless pair, "You didn't happen to see anyone slip this under the door, did you? at yesterday's audience.

"Oh, no, Your Majesty!" exclaimed both of the men together, a little too pat.

"Who else was on duty in the antechamber or hallways during the period when the letter was delivered?" enquired the princess.

"Langley, Your Majesty!" cried the pair in chorus. It was like they'd planned the whole thing in advance.

"Yes, of course," said Ozma. The third guardsman had been in and out of the throneroom all the morning; had among other errands introduced that strange woman in the veil. But the princess at once dismissed Langley as a possible author of the screed. He was well known to be deeply attached, and with reason, to his Gillikin girl friend, Serena. Well then, who...?

Ozma got no further with her thought before Fattywiggins yelped, "Hey, look at that! It's another one!" for she had seen Draxton take from his pocket a second letter, twin to the earlier one in question, and with a deal of tongue-extending lay it on the table.

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The child was just reaching to pick it up when her sovereign got to the fair before her, snatched it up and thrust it down her bodice. She directed her gaze at Draxton severely.

"An explanation, if you please."

Poor Draxton fell into a coughing fit but Lapstart spoke for him. "We found that under a yew tree clipped in the form of the Princess Dorothy in the topiary garden while waiting there for Your Grace yesterday afternoon."

"Oh. And why have I waited twenty-four hours to receive it?"

"When we got our walking papers we were afraid to bring up anything else controversial."

"That seems reasonable," admitted the girl ruler. "Again, there's no danger that you put it there yourselves?"

"Oh, heaven forfend. Your Grace!"

Both men tugged their forelocks, swallowed noisily and retired from the discussion, concentrating rather on the refreshments, which they continued to swallow noisily.

Fattyw captured everyone's attention by saying, "I know who put it there."

"Please tell us," requested her sovereign.

"Well, it stands to reason, doesn't it? Who's employed nowadays to deliver messages in Oz? The unicycle brigade!"

Ozma thought it over but the Wizard said at once, "Don't be foolish, Fatty. The unicyclists were introduced, at your own suggestion, just to bring messages speedily from hand to hand, not to stick them under doors or topiary bushes."

Fattywiggins retired in confusion and sat fiddling with Ozma's coronet. She was tempted to try it on her own head but thought just at the moment that might not be polite.

Then right on cue a green messenger came hurrying across the grass from the steps leading from the palace. They glimpsed the head and hand of Langley in the distance showing the man the way.

"Oh me, what now?" sighed Ozma.

The U.B. man touched his cap. "Express from Her Good-

ness, Glinda, Your Grace. A verbal message, if you please. She sends to say the Trolls are up in arms and every hour more confederates flock to the rebels and still their power increases!"

"What!" cried the Queen, springing to her feet. "Rebellion? Here in Oz?! The mind reels. But what can Glinda know? She's in the south—though why?! When she should serve her sovereign in the north."

"The great Book of Records, Your Grace," reminded the respectful messenger.

"I cry you Mercy," exclaimed Ozma, going all Shakespearean under stress. "Of course. But flocking to arms? What can they mean?"

"It's rather an armed strike, your highness—as I can learn," went on the man in green, stooping to slip off his ankle guards. "The trolls have always been paid in gold—of their own digging. But now it appears they want double the value, and in amethysts!"

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

It had been two days since word had arrived of the strike of the Trolls but Queen Ozma had been prevented from taking any decisive action. This was the first time she had ever been faced with a large-scale insurrection among her own subjects. The attempted invasion by the (g)Nomes^s didn't count. They were foreigners. (Incidentally, it would not surprise the girl Ruler if the Nomes were to be found to have incited their cousins, the trolls, in the present instance.)

What was she to do? She couldn't order out the troops to quell a rising of her own peoples. Well, "own people"; the trolls were no more "Iowa" than that they had been allowed to immigrate freely into Oz from the time when the kingdom got definitive word of the pogroms aimed at world faerie around the globe, especially in Scandinavia. Then trolls crawled out of mountain caves and from under bridges, picked up their satchels, and hit the refugee trail to Oz.

Once arrived, they had elected almost at once and almost unanimously to populate the mountainous north, whose terrain was reminiscent of the homelands they had left. Plenty of scope for their mining propensities there as well and this was a reason

§ See *The Emerald City of Oz*. Editor's note.

Ozma was particularly glad to welcome the trolls. With them as willing workers, Oz would no longer be dependent on the Nomes for the importation of the precious stones that were so necessary to the country's life style.

The only tiresome thing was that the trolls insisted from the start on maintaining the crass system of money trade and wages that they had obtained among them out in the world. The Oz princess had been forced to go along with their demands if she was to have an uninhibited flow of jewels to the Emerald City and about the country. She condescended to allow the workers to retain a proportion of all the gems they mined, and when she thought about it she couldn't but concede that that was no more than fair.

But now! The latest word from newsreader Glinda was that there was total embargo. *No* jewels at all were going to be supplied, costless, to the court of Oz or elsewhere. It was to be strictly cash on the barrelhead. This meant that all of Oz was going to be forced back into the market economy that had, admittedly, prevailed in the magic land until quietly phased out under the beneficent rule of the Scarecrow as king and of Ozma herself .

There seemed to be nothing for it but to mobilize for armed conflict with the rebels and to force them back to the kindly ungrasping system of barter that had flourished so smoothly these late years. Only, mobilize what? What troops were there to "order out"?

The Royal Army of Oz consisted of one 'troop', the old Soldier with the Green Whiskers, Wantowin O. ("Omby Amby") Battles. Ordering him out wouldn't accomplish much. Anyway, it would be a pity to disturb the fellow in his present happiness with his second wife, kind Tollydiggle.

There was the Princess' own honor guard, of course, consisting of a dozen men, but that was strictly ceremonial. The guardsmen were not even armed. As well attack the trolls with any dozen men picked up in the street.

Well, the Girl Ruler hated to do it. *Must* she always be

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running to the great Sorceress of the South to have her chestnuts plucked out of the fire for her? Yes, it kind of looked like she did. What's more, in the present emergency Ozma thought of suggesting to Glinda that she outright take up her residence in the northern country until all the problems that currently afflicted that benighted region be resolved. In addition to this latest emergency with the obstreperous trolls one was not to forget the resurgence of the Purpleys nor yet the less pressing problem of the paucity of pork on Gillikin tables and the absence in the land of its heraldic animals for trotting out on state occasions.

Ozma sat on her throne in her dressing gown. She sometimes did that when she was going to have a good think. She personally locked the doors to the Throne Room. As she sat deeply pondering now her hand in her pocket encountered a piece of stiff paper.

She drew it out. Oh, that ridiculous second note. She had been going to look at it in bed last night but then forgotten. Now, idly, she opened the emerald envelope and read.

“Biped soufflé
Or Russian roulette:
Oh, this is the way
You’ll ‘do your thing’ yet.
When you cook with a gun
Then life can be gay.
When you’re shot, then you’re done.
It’s slack! and olé!
You’re biped soufflé!

Take a gallon of milk,
Add some lemon to sour—
Or elderbloomr wine!
That’ll make flower power.
Of saltpeter a pinch
And of toothpaste a tube.

Add a peck of corn meal
And of bouillon a cube.
(If you do, you're a boob!)"

So far the thing scanned and the princess began to be quite interested. But suddenly it was as if the poet lost control. He/she/it continued,

"Boob, boom, boobity-boom—the heart.
Coronary thrombosis.
Whiz, whir, whizzity-whir—the nerves.
Ordinary neurosis.
Think fast!
Life's past!
Damn! Blast!
(Watch out for cows, emeralds, and glockenspiels.)"

Perhaps providentially the queen had no time to contemplate what the rigmarole might mean before there was a polite but insistent knocking on the door of the antechamber.

Hastily Ozma snatched off her housecoat and threw it behind the throne, then moved with grace to the double doors and unlocked them. There a little deputation waited upon Her Grace.

There was faithful Omby Amby (who had clearly done the knocking) and handsome Langley of the Honor Guard and the dear old Wizard of Oz. The soldier said, "General Battles—and company—at Your Majesty's service." He saluted and clicked his heels together.

"Yes?" said the queen, alert. "How may I help you? What do you wish?"

The Wizard took the word, saying, "How may we help *you*, dear Princess? We sensed you might wish counsel."

"Quite right. Come in, do." Democratically the young ruler took her seat on the top step of the dais and signaled her visitors to group themselves about her.

"As you all know," said she, "there has been an uprising—well, up to now they're calling it a 'strike'—among the troll laborers at our northern amethyst mines—"

"It's just not the right time for that kind of thing!" exclaimed the Wizard indignantly. "With Your Majesty's twenty-first birthday ball coming up and all."

"There is never a right time for that kind of thing," stated the Princess. "But to come to conclusions quickly; naturally we are not going to be drawn into armed conflict. We must conduct ourselves at all times as if violence is not thinkable. Unfortunately, on our own unaided own we can accomplish little by magic. For that sort of powerful assistance we must apply to great Glinda in the south. But first, do you think it would be lost motion to send a deputation to call on the trolls?"

"An armed deputation, your majesty?" asked Omby Amby, doing present-arms with an imaginary rifle.

"Oh, I hardly think so. And yet a delegation of bold bluff men who would not at once be frightened off by any threatening action the trolls might perform."

Langley signified that he would like to speak and was allowed to. "It seems the natural thing that Your Highness' palace guard should go," he proposed, "commanded of course by brave General Battles."

"Well—," pondered Ozma. "Yes... you may be right. What do you think, Mr. Diggs?"

The Wizard responded fervently. "My Queen, whoever journeys to the Trolls, for God's sake let not us two stay at home. Recall that you have other business too in Gillikinland; you will want to take action before the Purpleys spread over all of Oz."

"Yes, that's right," agreed the fairy ruler. "I keep forgetting that. I think I must myself view this vaunting purplitude if I'm to be convinced of it."

"Has your grace seen out the window yet this morn?"

"Why, no. I came straight here from my repose, to have a think. Why...?" And here the little queen sprang up and ran to the nearest embrasure.

Guardsman Langley, with all due reverence, lifted her by the hips so she could see out into the gardens. "Good gracious!" she cried. "The grass and trees are all grey!"

The Wizard had followed to glance out. "That's what one gets when violet overlies green, your majesty. In time no doubt the violet will darken and then your capital will be as purple as any part of Gillikinland."

Ozma had paled. "All this is bad indeed. How soon can you be ready to leave, gentlemen?" she addressed her supporters.

"Almost at once, Your Grace."

"Then bustle, bustle! Caparison my horse!—or no, drat! My horse is away with Dorothy and her kin. No help for it. We'll simply have to walk."

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

Ozma and company were not the only ones to be setting out for the North. Even now Glinda the Good Sorceress was on the roof of the Pink Palace overseeing the loading of a fleet of swan chariots.

The pressure had at last grown too great. Glinda hardly had time to eat a meal or catch a nap so occupied was she in following in the Great Record Book the bulletins that were entered in its pages in a steady stream. All of them these days appeared to be about developments (none of them good) in Gillikinland.

It seemed unreasonable to remain seated far off here in the remotest corner of Oz from the scene of activity. When those fatal words appeared concerning the kidnapping of Caressopigs the wise and kind sorceress knew she must act. It was her own doing that the pigs had been encouraged to settle in the swine-deprived north. She could not now calmly remain at home and let the pigs stew in their own juice or, worse yet, other people's.

She would establish headquarters at a strategic point in the Gillikin country and *stay* there until purplitude and troll rebellion were brought under control. For that she could not be without her helps and guides and that is why she now stood on

the pink gravel of the flat rooftop and directed as her sweating girl guards carried the laboratory equipment, trundled the globes, and struggled to hoist the vast Book of Records onto the largest flatbed transport chariot. In the end the Sorceress herself, good-sportively, lent a shoulder to tip the book the last bit of the way.

Now, was there anything else? Oh, well, it would not hurt to determine just where she was going! Brusquely she jerked from its already stowed place in the main carriage the roll of maps and spread them on the parapet. Her aides, Sergeant Jinjur and Lance-Corporal Cinna Munn, leant (respectfully) closer to have a look.

Let her see now. She'd want to be somewhere rather central, not too far from the home of the caresso-pigs, and, too, it would not be amiss to keep a watchful eye on Mombi, who, as far as Glinda knew, had given no sign of being a reformed character. But the great thing was to be within range of the Trolls' mine workings at the far end of the Gillikin mountains. With that in mind the good witch finally settled on a location overlooking the junction of two branches of the Gillikin River, opposite the great gloomy Rain Forest. There was sure to be a ruined castle or abandoned stately home somewhere in the vicinity. She would seek one out as she flew over the district with her swan fleet.

It was not as if Glinda contemplated transferring her headquarters right across Oz permanently. Well red as she was, she knew her proper place to be, in the last analysis, among her own people in the crimson country of the Quadlings. But just now, with everything at sixes and sevens in the purple land and she knowing herself to be the only one in Oz who could *really* cope, it was unrealistic to remain budgeless far off in the South. Ozma had hinted her need of her up there. Tonight the sorceress would put in a call to the fairy ruler and let her know her unarticulated wish had been made reality.

Nothing now remained but to take flight. The pink potentate shook back her snooded locks, stepped aboard the lead chariot, and took the reins. Her faithful rose swans took a long

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speed-collecting run along past the rows of brick chimneys, and rose. Hi-yo! Away! The other seven chariots swung into V-formation behind.

In less than an hour the fleet neared the outskirts of the Emerald City and there Glinda received a shock. Below spread the streets and parks and jeweled towers of the capital in all their familiar splendor. How violetly they shone! “Violet”?! Glinda gasped. Not only was “the Emerald City” a misnomer for a metropolis totally lilac-colored but purplitude was visibly nibbling at the edges of the red expanse of Quadlinga itself. It did produce, admittedly, a most gorgeous magenta hue that spread over field and stream in lovely profusion

The Good Sorceress knew she had not been a moment too soon in electing to come to grips with the expansion of the Purpleys.

She shook the reins imperatively, even used the whip—though of course only for sound effect—and urged her faithful swan bearers on to the top of their bent. Onward flashed the fleet, and in just under another hour the far-peering sorceress saw what she aspired to.

At the upper end of a small spur valley on the northern slope of the Gillikin range a dark tower rose from the depths of a purple forest. Glinda handed the reins to Corporal Munn and crouched down where the front guard-rail of the equipage gave lea for her to examine hastily the map without its blowing away from her. Strange. No tower, or any other construction, was indicated at that site.

Mysteriousness aside, the place seemed ideal. Almost too much so. Though clearly unoccupied, the tower—or castle really, and of some magnificence—appeared to be in fair repair. It was a bijou chateau, certainly in comparison with the witch’s wonted splendor of accommodation at her own palace.. But then she wasn’t going to stay there forever. She sent signals for the swans to alight in the only clearing near the pile.

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

It was not quite as easily done as said.

Ozma dispatched her attendants to get ready to travel, then sent for her maid, Jellia Jamb, and made several requests of her. She had got no further than asking the girl to open the windows of the throne room and to pick up the dressing-gown coat from behind the royal chair, when there was a flutter at those windows and some fairies came flying in.

"Peaseblossom!" called Ozma. "How nice to see you again!" She also named by name Peaseblossom's companions.

"Oh. Your Majesty!" cried the lead fairy. "Can you forgive me for not standing upon the order of my going the last time I had the honor of being received by Your Grace!?"

"I did rather wonder where you'd got to," admitted the Girl Ruler.

"I'm afraid when your favorite, darling Fattywiggins, offered to sit down on me, I panicked," explained the fairy. "Do. please, forgive me! But now I bring tidings from our well beloved Queen Lurline. I am sorry to have to report that the naughty Trolls have kidnapped a couple of the Caresso-pigs."

"Oh!" cried Ozma and burst briefly into tears. "So many calamities! And whatever will Fatty say when she hears!"

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"May I be the one to tell her?" asked Peaseblossom maliciously.

Ozma looked up from her handkerchief and stopped crying abruptly. "Oh! Well, I think I'd better tell her. As it happens, I'm just off to the northland myself to try to get a view over various disastrous developments there. If you like, you may join us. But as for Fattywiggins, I think it might be well for you to keep out of her way."

"Nothing I'd like better," confessed Peaseblossom. "And may we indeed have the pleasure of accompanying Your Majesty north? I think we might even be helpful as guides."

"By all means," confirmed Ozma heartily. "Oh! but then of course Fattyw may *not* go. She'll be heartbroken, and I myself will miss the dear girl. But... never mind; I've thought of a consolation prize for her."

Nor was it long before the little queen sent for her favorite and imparted the news. "Fatty dear, I'm called away. Yes, I'm going to the north country for a bit to try to right matters there." Here the fairy named a few of the troubles that were afflicting Gillikinland, while taking care to say nothing of kidnapped caresso-pigs. She knew the dear girl would have a temper tantrum and kick and scream if not allowed to go and rescue her porcine pals.

Instead: "While I'm gone, my dear Fattyw, would you like to sway the sceptre? Be regent in my place?"

"Oh, boy, *would* I?" cried Fattywiggins with delight and quite forgot to be vexed because she wasn't invited to go traveling with her queen.

"You'll have the Patchwork Girl to call on if you need advice," continued Ozma.

"Oh, she'll be a *great* help," said Fats sarcastically. "No, don't worry, Ozma. I know I can cope." But suddenly she cried, "What about your birthday?! Oh. Ozma, you *can't* go! Why, all the invitations have been sent out!"

"Exactly, dear. That's why you must be here in my stead: to receive my guests and see that they have a nice time anyway."

Fattywiggins stopped her dithering at that and, mindful of Queen Victoria's dictum, she said, "I will be good."

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

Upon receiving his marching orders, Guardsman Langley of course flew to the side of his true love.

Serena had easily given way before urgings from every side to prolong her stay in the Emerald City to cover attendance at the great birthday ball. Gracious Ozma, in extending the invitation, had reinforced it by giving notice that she was making available a tidy room in the servants' quarters on the top floor of the Palace for the reception of the Sweetly Singing Seamstress. Then the gifted harpist spent her days in practice with the Emerald City Brass Band under the direction of the Herr Kapellmeister.

The lovers had various trysts planned daily, and now Langley arrived in the topiary garden on the dot to hear Serena say, "Oh, Langley, you are just on time."

"I was trying to be as precise as possible," said the guardsman a little fussily. "You know I would not want to miss a date with you." He dangled a tiny parcel from a forefinger.

"Oh, aren't you the sweet one!" cried the girl, though whether as praise for her boyfriend's punctuality or in anticipation of the gift is not clear.

Langley now made a formal and admittedly somewhat stiff speech. "Sweet enough, I hope, to make properly honeyed the words which should accompany this token of love. We have been

sweethearts since we were children in Gillikinland. Now I want to make certain that we will always be together —”

Before he could finish Serena broke in impulsively. “Indeed we were together a long time—that is, until you saw fit to join the Royal Palace Guard! Now you’re more married to them than you are to me.” She pretended to pout prettily.

“That will all change in time. I swear it! But, oh, how shall I speak it? I must be torn from you!”

“‘Torn from’!?” cried the girl, dropping every pretense at pouting.

“It’s true. My regiment marches in an hour! We are assigned to safeguard royal Ozma on a journey into our homeland. Although it will be fine to come to Gillikinland—”

“Why bother? Gillikinland is coming here!” Serena tried despairingly to turn the pathos of the moment to merry wit.

“Indeed, but our sovereign needs would have it so. ’Tis just this empurpling of the land she feels she has to face, as well as the overweeningness of the trolls. Now word has just come that a couple of the Caresso-pigs have been kidnapped.”

“And sold to the slaughterhouse!” cried the seamstress, who herself had missed pork chops back home beside the Soup Sea.

“Not quite. Not yet. But it tends that way. Ozma can’t countenance such cruelty. And so—”

“I’ll go with you!” decided the maiden, getting ready, like Marlene, to kick off her shoes and follow her man over the sandy wastes. “I’ll be a camp follower, a — a daughter of the regiment!”

“I’m afraid the Queen would take a dim view of that,” said Langley, placing blame a bit unfairly. But he *didn’t* in fact want to mix up career and love life. Who really does? “No, darling, we’ll be back within the week. Ozma hasn’t canceled the birthday ball. We’ll dance the cotillion! And you shall wear my ring.”

Here the lover at last relented and dropped into Serena’s cupped hands the little parcel. “Vouchsafe to wear this ring,” he ordered lovingly. “Look! how my ring encompasses thy finger. Just so thy breast encloses my poor heart. Wear both of them, for both of them are thine.”

C H A P T E R T H I R T Y - T H R E E

Ozma was off! Cheered to the welkin by her loyal subjects as she walked, like Jimmy Carter in time to come, through the streets of her capital, accompanied by her honor guard, all twelve men strong (including the hapless pair, Lapstart and Draxton; I think the princess had some idea she could conveniently lose them on the way).

She walked with a will, determined to put behind her many miles in a day. To this end she had exchanged her stay-at-home slippers for sturdy green – sorry, violet – walking boots and was wearing a serviceable tailored version of her usual hostess gown. She did not plain to stop before elevenses. But here she had to think again! for suddenly the air was alive with the sound of laughter. Ethereal voices, prophesying balls. One by one a cloud of tiny sprites winked into visibility, hovering in the air about the biggest fairy of them all.

“Your Majesty!” cried Titania. “Has our dear Queen Lurline yet arrived?”

“Why, no,” said Ozma, halting despite all her intentions. “At least I personally have not seen her yet.”

“That’s strange. We made sure she must have flown hither. When we woke early this morning in the vine yards we found

her missing. We assumed she had left early to get ready for the birthday ball."

"We know she was looking forward to it," put in Mab. "—as, indeed, are all of us. We've hardly talked of anything else."

"If she has arrived she has not made the fact known to me," stated Ozma. "But here are your compatriots," she indicated, as Peaseblossom and the rest flew up. "They brought us the grievous tidings of the stealing of the pigs."

The two fairy groups exchanged a round of greetings and then they all fell in behind the purposefully onward-striding Queen of Oz. Titania burred on, "Oh, yes, shocking. We know our Sovereign was much exercised at witnessing the captivity of the two caresso-pigs. But so unlike her to leave us without a word as to where she was going."

"Never mind," said Mustardseed. "We can practise a cappella as we fly along with the dear Princess. It's better than kicking our heels at the royal palace with nothing to do but worry and wonder."

Indeed, the tuneful lilting of the fairy choir was charming entertainment as the party, partly footborne, partly wingborne, forged on to the Gillikin Gate and beyond. It was going on noon when the company caught up with another party bound for the distant north: Farmer Brownthum and his multi-flavored cows.

Involuntary aversion struck Ozma a-maze. But reason would not let her admit the feeling. She conquered it and advanced to the head of her strung-out company to hail: "Mr. Brownthum! Well met. And thank you once more for appearing so loyally at our reception. You and your herd deserve truly to rank among Oz personalities."

The countryman turned back and made an awkward but pleased bow. "Your Grace! How kind! And how comfortin'. You're travelin' north? It'll be grand to have company on the road... It was getting durned lonesome without pretty Selena here any more."

That speech made the girl ruler start, though she quickly masked it. She didn't have time to dawdle along at the pace of

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three ambling cows! But she simply lacked the heart to disappoint the good old farmer. She'd have to get out of it some way. But how?

Just for the moment she staved off the inevitable by eliding the intended break for refreshments and ordered the sandwich packets passed out for the hikers to munch as they pressed onward.

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

When Lazlodes yelled, "Come and get it! Chow is on!" everyone left the gem-grabbing game and flocked to the table which had been set up beside the Caresso-pigs' thatch-covered cottage. The pair from the kitchen served out the sweet-smelling cobs hot from the cauldron, heaping the platters to dangerous heights. There was a pitcher of sweet cider on the checked tablecloth. As a concession to their human guest dishes of butter and pepper and salt were placed, but the natural-eating pigs needed no such refinement—or debasement.

As Mombi hobbled to a seat she was introduced by Biff and Cleo who had by now come to terms with their tears. The old woman smirked and said, "Good things happen to good neighbors," at which everyone groaned but forgave her, knowing she meant well. She just wasn't used to saying pleasant things and performed it only indifferently. To forestall further platitudes someone shoved a plateful of corn in front of her. The analogy was not lost on the alert-minded woman. She helped herself to a couple of ears.

To make conversation Mombi said presently, "You mean you pigs can sniff out precious stones in the ground?"

"Well, yes, we can," admitted Homer. "But since all the rock

in Gillikinland seems to have turned into amethyst, there's no special art to that. Every little pebble is a jewel."

Suddenly Biff threw down his half-chewed ear. "Here we sit, stuffing our faces and making polite chitchat when all the while our Wee and Nilnul are held in captivity! Aren't we going to do anything?" he demanded.

"Yes," sniffed Cleo, perilously near weeping again. "If the trolls *have* got them, they're not going to come home by themselves."

"What do you think we should do?" asked Homer, directing his question to their guest, of whose intelligence he was beginning to get a fair impression.

"Would that I could be of help to you," declared Mombi, safe in her benevolence, knowing that she couldn't. The thing was that the witch all her life had done nothing but evil. She didn't know *how* to do anything constructive. It was the realization of this limitation to her craft that had lately produced the seeming softening in her attitude. She wanted to do some good deeds just to see if she could!

In the present case all she could think of was to pass the buck to another. Her fellow witch Glinda of the South was notorious for her goodness—and her power. Let the pigs apply to her. And she said as much:

"You might be well advised to go to Sorceress Glinda down in the Quadling country. She's about the only one with the know-how *and* the motivation to deal with the various unpromising developments here in the North.

"Indeed," the witch went on, "I wonder that Glinda hasn't come up here to have a gander at things herself. Even if she would, she can't do much, sitting way off there in her pink palace."

The pigs were enthusiastic. Oh, to be *doing* something—just about anything—rather than hanging around home and worrying themselves sick. "Then we'll go to Glinda!" cried Lazlodes, "to get our sister and brother back. I'll take—uhh, Homer with me—and Twee. Is that all right?"

"I think you're being wise," approved Mombi, while all the swine in chorus seconded her opinion.

"So that's settled," said the thoughtful Homer. "We'll leave for the Ruby City this very afternoon."

"I'll pack some things for you," said helpful Suze, eldest of the family females, who tended to play mother.

There was a general breaking up. Mombi thanked the caressopigs for their hospitality and was preparing to take the road when she looked away along the path she meant to follow and spied a large carriage proceeding in their direction very slowly and cautiously.

All the pigs ran to the pigget fence to have a look. Traffic on the puce brick road was rare enough that a conveyance of this size and description could create a sensation. As the equipage came on they could see that behind the carriage car trailed a wagon-bed loaded with an enormous oblong crate. As it drew nearer yet they made out the label words "Fragile", "Handle with care", "Caution!" and "This side up" stenciled on its sides. None of the words, however, gave a clue as to what was within.

"What is it?" the pigs called to the driver. "What have you got? What's inside the big box?" Two attendants who followed the load on foot answered for him.

"We're transporting a birthday gift to Princess Ozma in the Emerald City." The driver just looked straight ahead, keeping his eyes on the road.

"But what is it?! And who from?"

"That's all we're authorized to give out!"

The pigs dissolved in "oohhs" and "ahhs" but Twee said, "We'll get to see what it is when we go to the ball."

"Oh, do you have invitations?" asked Mombi interestedly.

"Yes, they arrived just yesterday. We suppose it must have been Fattywiggins who arranged for them. She loves us and naturally wouldn't want to see us left out."

Meanwhile the carriage and wagon, after holding a brief pause, were proceeding on down the road when Suze ran out of the house with a carpetbag clutched in her jaws. "Oh, wait!" she

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called, dropping the bag. "Kind wayfarers!" she cried. "Can you give our siblings a lift? They're on their way to the home of Glinda the Good!"

At last the haughty coachman condescended to look round. "All right. But make it snappy."

The carriage door was flung open and the strolling attendants pitched Lazlodes, Twee, and Homer up and in before the three sudden travelers had time to think what they were about. They scrambled to stick snouts out of the open window and wave desperately as they were driven off. (As there were no horses to speak of in Oz at this period bullocks were doing the hauling.)

"I hardly ever attend balls," resumed Mombi as those remaining behind turned away, she to take up her baskets and the caresso-pigs to do the dishes.

"Oh?" said Suze. In reality her mind was on another aspect of the approaching festivity. "Then you won't get to see how splendid our boys will look in their satin tuxedos. And the girls have ordered ball gowns from Serena the Sweetly Singing Seamstress."

"Oh, yes, I know her," said Mombi, then in a moment: "Listen, before you all take off for the ball, come over to visit me, will you? I'm just up the road, you know. I have something I'd like you to have, to take along to the capital."

Suze gave the witch her assurance but stood looking after her thoughtfully as Mombi hobbled off. To offer an al fresco meal to a passing sorceress was one thing but to actually seek her out in her own disreputable hut...?

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

As it turned out, the by now rather unwieldy company of voyagers from the Emerald City (two hundred strong, what with all the fairies that had joined them) were still together at the next important encounter, and it didn't get any wieldier as a result. It was well into the deep purple of darkest Gillikinland that the party came face to face with the oncoming bullock carriage and truck loaded with the great crate for Ozma's birthday.

The wizard Diggs had been entertaining. "About this novelty I have designed for the cabaret show during the birthday festivities," he said, and he held out a deck of cards, at each end card of which a thin wire handle appeared to be attached. Diggs put a finger through one wire end-loop, then with a practised gesture flipped the whole deck high in the air. The cards flew out in perfect line formation 'til each was clearly visible between its mates, then the whole fifty-two flew back again into a tidy deck in the Wizard's hand. "How's that?"

Ozma nodded abstractedly. She was thinking about the proclivities of cows.

"Now watch this!"

The Wizard shuffled the playing cards expertly within his

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two hands, not even requiring a tabletop to rest them on, and, even more strangely, without the near-invisible attaching wire seeming to get in the way. The prestidigitator halted at one point to show that the cards were just a deck of ordinary playing cards, though Ozma already knew that they were *not*. Still, the deuce of spades, the ol' Jack o' Diamonds, and the Queen of hearts looked very much as one was used to seeing them.

The Wizard shuffled the cards intensively another three times, presented them to his sovereign to affirm that they were well and truly jumbled, then again he flung the deck by its wire handle up in the air. He gave a quick twist of the wrist and the whole flight of cards turned over, to show the *backs* of the pasteboards spelling out in perfect order: "HAPPINESS IS OZ AND OZ IS HAPPINESS AND OZMA'S THE CAUSE OF IT ALL" before the whole articulated deck collapsed back into his hand.

"How do you like that, your majesty?" asked O.Z. even as the little queen politely clapped her hands. But her thoughts remained elsewhere. She smiled and nodded her head in a vague sort of way. She seemed distinctly worried.

Diggs looked at her askance. Well, of course she would be worried. The fairy sovereign was only making this trip because of her concern about things being out of kilter. A purple tide that spread over everything like a great skin cancer. An immigrant population that was not measuring up against the admittedly high standards that obtained in the great fairyland. The outbreak of crime in the form of pignapping. Perhaps worst of all was the danger that the whole country might be drawn into something as sordid as a market economy.

Yet when the kindly old gentleman kindly and gently enquired why it was that his queen stalked along with her eyes on the ground, the answer was none of these. Still pensive, with her chin in hand, Ozma replied:

"It's a volatile mixture we've got here. Have you noticed how restless the cows have become? They may not be only the mild and passive creatures we observed in the Audience Chamber. Remember how they moaned and mooed *more* at the reception

the other day? And only stopped when fairy Peaseblossom took her departure? Something is agitating the bovines and I think it's all these fairies. Cows and fairies are not a good combination. I hope it's not going to cause problems as this expedition goes on. I'm trying to think how we can lose Farmer Brownthum without hurting his feelings."

The Wizard prepared to pontificate. He'd read up the whole subject just recently. "It's traditional, of course. At least since the Dark Ages, and perhaps going all the way back to Greece and Egypt, it was a fond folk belief that when cattle went off their milk-giving or turned crazy and ran wild, it was the doing of the wee folk who deliberately tormented them. I dare say that's what Farmer B's animals are feeling now. They're afraid."

"Oh, Wizard, how silly of them. We fairies would not hurt a fly!" said the princess, aggrieved. "Do you really think that's the explanation?"

"I dare say it's involuntary. Intellectually the cows may know that fairies nowadays have—saving your graces—reformed and no longer tease cattle. But they can't help it. It's like a cat when it scents a dog: it can't help its hair and tail rising up and itself scooting up the nearest tree."

"But the cows have seemed sweet enough when just I was around, and I'm a fairy," puzzled Ozma.

"But your highness has human antecedents as well. That may have made the difference."

Alas, both queen and courtier were way out in left field in their analysis of cow motivation. This was revealed at last and suddenly at the moment when Bossie and Chippie and Shamrock came over the brow of a rise and saw the bullock-drawn carriage not twenty yards ahead.

There was instant pandemonium. Now that they saw (they thought) the solution to their problem, Bossie and her pals knew in a trice what had been eating them. Without a word of warning they set into a gallop, straight toward the carriage team.

The four plodding bullocks (or oxen), faced with an oncoming stampede of co-racialists and not realizing the purely

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amative nature (or maybe they did!) of the onslaught, panicked.

They too took off, to try to get out of the way, and dashed forward and to one aide, where in the twinkling of an eye they had upset the carriage in the deep ditch, spilling pigs in all directions, not to mention the coachman and off-riders, and ending with the grand collapse of the big birthday crate on its side in four feet of purple mud and water.

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

On a door torn from the wrecked carriage by the united efforts of sturdy members of the Palace Guard, they carried the casualties along to the house of. the Caresso-pigs, the nearest habitation, a couple of miles on.

The casualties were two: Lazlodes, sparking power of the pig team that had set out so short a time before to consult with witch Glinda; and one of the hauling-team out-riders. Nursed diligently by motherly Suze, who was helped by her sister Cleo, the carriage attendant recovered. He was after all an Ozite and *couldn't* die. In the end he regained almost his old vigor, after a broken leg and bad bruising. Lazlodes died.

This was what Ozma's soul had all along divined. Now that it had happened—strange, even unfeeling, as it may sound—it was a sort of relief to her. We have all experienced the same. To dread something, to be uneasy in our inmost heart about some event, known, or unspecifiable, that must happen, and then when it has done so and the worst is known, a lightening of the spirits. Perhaps it is to be replaced by regret or grief but at least the intolerable dread is over.

Lazlodes drowned, underneath the carriage in the four feet of mud. He was dead before the combined strength of all the

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human survivors succeeded in uprighting the vehicle, dead when they hauled him from the slime and laid him on the door, dead on arrival at home.

The trouble, you see, was that he was mortal, a visitor from outside Oz. Though he might share in the famous unagingness of even newcomers to Oz on taking up residence in the wonderland, he could not lose his mortal status, could not become an immortal. Death remained always a possibility. And Ozma had known.

That was why she heeded the old soothsaying that she had most to fear from domestic animals. That was why a pall of worry had descended upon her when her party joined the herd of cows. It was the first time in her reign that anyone known to her had died. It was hence the greatest defeat of her time on the throne. She had done right to divine disaster.

The Caressos were thrown into a despair beside which the kidnapping of their other siblings faded to the status of a minor distress. Nobody in all the crowd that now filled the pig bungalow had ever seen death before and they were devastated. The funeral, in the garden, was a sombre occasion and one almost unique in Oz annals.

Unfeeling bacon-fanciers such as Joe King and Queen Hyacinth might have thought it a waste to bury thirty pounds of prime pork but any other idea naturally never crossed the minds of the mourners in the cottage. (Cremation might have smelt disconcertingly appetizing!)

But afterwards life had to go on.

The poor bullocks, inadvertent authors of the tragedy, had been freed from harness early on in the course of the emergency and turned out to graze in a pasture along the way to the cottage of the caresso-pigs. As a matter of fact Farmer Brownthum's cows joined them there. Now that the milkgivers had realized the extent of their fatal misconception they were properly contrite. All frenzy had fled. They mingled with their co-racialists in the field amicably and very docilely. As for the rest of the southward-bound travel train, nothing was attempted

until the day after the mishap. The parties spent the night encamped in pavilions that O.Z. Diggs, wizard, erected from pocket handkerchiefs in a meadow abutting on the property of the Caressos. After the solemnity of the funeral in the early morning, Ozma revisited the scene of the sad accident.

"What *is* the big crate?" she enquired of the dour driver as she gazed at the great heliotrope-colored container, now stained by the mud more purple than ever.

"It was to have been a surprise for Your Majesty's birthday," informed the custodian. "I suppose you may as well know now. It looks like the case will never reach the Emerald City anyway."

"Who sent it?" wondered the Princess, groaning curious even in the midst of her distress and on-going worry.

"The U.P.S.," stated the coachman in some surprise. He was of those who believe that what they know everyone must by nature know.

"Ah" said Ozma. "The Unicycle Production Service. I recall; their workshops are in the north. Just this side of the Forest of Gugu, are they not? Well, how kind of them to think of that."

"Your Grace did found the operation, after all," said the driver, unbending a bit. "The managers are grateful."

Ozma had to get on with her mission with as little delay as possible but she did not feel she could leave the matter of the wrecked travel train unresolved. In the end the whole morning went in rounding up all able-bodied men and cattle and dragging the half-submerged coach and freight cart once more upon the road.

Then said the queen, "Now that I have received, so impromptu, my gift, shall we not open it? It will save you having to try to make your way on to the capital in your somewhat disabled condition."

The caravan attendants concurred, a crowbar and hammers were brought out (from under the seats of the coach), and the gift displayed, there on the open road. Ozma smiled for the first time since the tragedy.

Bicycles!

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Or fairycycles, to be more exact. (Proud as they were of their principal product, the manufacturers did not expect that ordinary immortals would be able to cope with *unicycles*!) Fairycycles, in all shapes and sizes, wrought of feather-light lavender-tinted magic tin: as thin as ordinary sheet tin but of incredible durability. A whole bicycle weighed two pounds, if that.

Princess Ozma was captivated. So were O.Z. Diggs and General Battles and Guardsman Langley and his mates and even the sorrowing caresso-pigs. They pulled out any number of the fifty assorted machines and tried them on the puce bricks of the (once) yellow brick road. The fairycycles proved easy to steer and pedal and their fairyation was further evidenced by their ability to remain standing upright even if not supported by a third prop.

"Oh, just what I wanted!" cried Ozma, elated. For her speeding mind at once saw how the devices could help her make up for the time her expedition had lost. Nay, more: flying down the road on bicycles her party could do in hours what would have taken them days on foot.

When nearly all fifty machines had been offloaded they were seen to number among them also four-pedaled versions. Now who—?! But in a trice Ozma saw who. Four-footed friends, of course. "Here, Biff," said she. "Try if you can manage." She pointed to a low four-pedal (but still just two-wheeled) model. These were guided by a snout-bar on top!

The well-balanced caresso-pig mounted the little vehicle. After just a little wobbling he trundled off down the road as deftly as you please, and stopped only by running into an old plum tree by the side of the road and falling off.

"Hooray!" cried all the watchers and at once everybody picked out a bike to suit him. Ozma, looking into the bottom of the nearly empty crate, saw something that cleared away even one more small preoccupation, namely how she was to disappoint Farmer Brownthum not too disappointingly. She wasn't.

What she saw was four copies of the heavy-duty cycle model:

low-slung, solid (though still fairylight-weight), equipped with four pedals and tail-guard.

Chippie, Bossie, and Shamrock would ride!

By and by all the neighborhood turned out to see the three milk cows meekly taking to the road, borne on lilac-tinted velocipedes. I have watched them myself many a time. Do you ever see cows riding bicycles in America?

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

While Princess Ozma and her entourage, bicycle-borne, were skimming on along the road to the north, the Caresso-pigs, in deep mourning, went to visit Mombi.

"We promised we would, you know," reminded Suze.

"At least, I promised—sort of. Well, anyway it will be something to do to keep our minds off. We've nothing to occupy us but worry until the Princess gets our brother and sister rescued."

The other pigs, despondent, agreed. They all put on the formal clothes they had originally intended to wear to the Birthday ball, and to these they applied black rosettes to indicate their funereal status. Two by two they walked up the road, not running, of course; that would have looked too much like playing.

"Look at how the leaves have turned bright shades of magenta," said Homer. "Gosh, is it autumn already?"

"Hardly," said Cleo. "It's only mid-August."

It seemed to have escaped the caresso-pigs' notice that their neighbor Mombi had autumn or spring or whatever when *she* wanted. What otherwise was the good of being a witch if you couldn't even have the seasons when you preferred them, at least as far as concerned the confines of your own garden?

"The leaves *are* beginning to fall off the trees," confirmed Biff. "It *must* be fall."

"And look at all those delicious apples," directed Twee, indicating the trees in the garden just ahead. "I'll bet you Miss Mombi wouldn't mind if we took a few."

However, she gobbled up only one as she ran up the path to the witch's hut and pulled the string connected to an old bell.

The bell clanged several times. "Who's there?" called a voice from around behind the little building, where Mombi was feeding her prize fowls. She pretended not to know it was the Caresso-pigs.

"It's just us, your 'good neighbors'," shouted the swine in unison. How dear Queen Ozma had gaped yesterday when the pigs related how the witch herself had made use of that unlikely phrase.

Ozma seemed unable to believe her ears when the pigs told how Mombi had recently seemed to thaw and was no longer the neighbor-keeping-her-distance they had thitherto been used to. The girl ruler was gratified. Every bit of extra peace and quiet in her realm was grist to her mill.

But when she heard that Mombi had actually invited the pigs to call and even spoken of matters relating to the sovereign's own approaching jubilee, the little fairy had grown doubtful. What kind of plot might the traditionally wicked woman not be hatching?

"No, thank you," Ozma had said when the Caessos in sudden enthusiasm suggested she go *with* them to visit the witch. No date had been set; it might be any time. "I think I ought to let sleeping dogs lie," she said. carelessly the fairy mixed a metaphor. "I've enough on my plate already. No, don't even greet her from me. Feelings are still too fragile for that." After all, it was only ten years since the very existence of the young regent-to-be was being threatened by her foster mother. "But," concluded the queen, "speak to her very kindly and assure the woman that the good will of the ruler of Oz goes to *all* who keep the peace."

But now Mombi ran round to the front door, her apron strings flying. "Such a pleasant surprise!" she began, but then she saw the mourning rosettes and the sorrowful expressions. "Oh, dear, whatever's the matter?" For of course no one had paid a special call so far on Mombi to keep her abreast of the news.

The caresso-pigs burst into tears. Then it all came out. Their hostess made them sit down on stools or on the floor while they poured out the tale of the death of officious Lazlodes whom, nevertheless, everybody had loved.

"You poor things," said Mombi, and quickly served them cups of witch's brew, known to have a therapeutic effect. As the (mild) liquor coursed through their veins the pigs gradually gave over weeping and began to look distinctly more cheerful.

"And now dear Princess Ozma is off to restore at least our other brother and sister to us," stated Cleo.

"Ozma, bmpf," grunted Mombi, whose disaffection for her former foster son had flared up anew. She had seen the young Princess pedal past her door that morning without even turning her head. It was the ruler's own old boyhood home! Yet she hadn't let that stop her. The snub rankled.

The pigs heard her expression with surprise for they of course thought that everyone adored Ozma. To turn the conversation from what seemed might be a delicate topic Suze said, "But you asked us to call, I think? Something about something you wanted us to take along to the Emerald City?"

"Never mind," blurted the witch rudely, but then regretted her impetuosity. It wasn't the pigs' fault if she had now had second thoughts about dispatching any further birthday gifts to that ingrate foster-child. Besides, with Ozma clearly heading off into the boondocks it could look as if there might not be going to be any birthday festivities. "I mean," she corrected, "I don't want to send anything to the capital. But I—er, I have a present for you yourselves."

"Oh, goody," cried the caresses, simple souls who never could resist the lure of a new toy. "What is it? What is it you have got for us?"

Mombi thought rapidly. It was true, she had brought back from Emerald City as a treat for herself a new chemistry set. Maybe she could arrange something with that which could prove an entertainment for the pigs.

"It's a surprise," temporized the witch. "It isn't ready yet. But one day soon you'll receive it.. When it happens maybe you will recognize it as coming from me."

On that mysterious but enticing note the topic was dropped. Soon afterwards the caresso-pigs returned home feeling that good relations had been cemented with their strange neighbor.

But Mombi lingered long over the alembics that evening. Whatever was she going to dream up to amuse the pigs?

'Pigs,' she mused. Twigs, wigs, figs, jigs. Or swine, twine, brine, kine? Hogs, dogs, frogs, logs, bogs—no, that last wouldn't do; it was only an eye rhyme. Same thing with 'cogs'. Boars? doors, floors, oars, snores. In desperation she thought of shoats: boats, coats, oats, notes, motes, floats. Finally, floats, oars, bogs, and brine among them did suggest. something, but it was only when she recalled the trite expression "filthy as a pig" that she at last got it right. Or course the caresso-pigs weren't filthy. On the contrary they were normally almost painfully well scrubbed. But if they liked scrubbing, then something with soap in it might be just the thing to tickle their fancy.

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

Thousands of trolls were out of sight, invisible, and nowhere to be seen. No wonder. They were all far down within the bowels of the earth mining amethysts furiously. Their going on strike didn't of course amount to actually stopping work. The "strike" was merely one against any form of loading of supply trains to haul their product to the waiting (and by now already seriously under-engaged) workshops of the 'Emerald' City.

Now that Purplitude (they were already beginning to capitalize it) had turned the entire rock content of Gillikinland into (admittedly low-grade) amethyst, one might wonder why the trolls need labor quite so furiously. But that was it: the miners continued to busy themselves only with the highest-quality gems. And not a one was Ruler Ozma going to get unless she came begging for it herself.

"A fat chance of that!" joked watchtroll Frumple coarsely as he and Ankle climbed the guard tower. Ankle guffawed appreciatively.

The guard tower was a new construction just outside the main gate of the amethyst workings on the north slope of the Gillikin Mountains. To think that a branch of the road of yellow bricks, symbol of the ever-growing prestige and luxury of Oz,

should lead the unwary traveler to something so un-Ozian and ungracious, even hostile, as a guard tower!

But it did, and other unfriendlinesses were in wait for such travelers: the sight of a closed main gate to the mines and the sound of the dull and heavy tramp of the feet of pickets who plodded slowly in a wide circle, carrying signs which read, "Unfair working conditions", "Trolls on general strike", "A plea for higher wages", and "Amethysts make Oz a better place to live!" The picket walkers were relatively few in number. There was no need of them for going to combat with possible scabs who might question their right to the mining jobs they held. Heaven forfend. Who would want to do the dirty dark dangerous job of gem-extracting when they had immigrant trolls now to do it for them? So thought the occasional farmer on his cart or woodsman with his slings as he passed by and heard the trolls hollering to gain the attention of wayfarers and expound their grievances to them.

In fact nobody stopped to gape at the trouble-makers/freedom fighters picketing rather desolately there. Why, if something like that had happened in the big city there would be crowds of on-lookers, inevitably giving the strikers a sense of their own importance. But no, the poor trolls were the underdogs of Oz. Nobody cared about them but relegated them to drudgerous mining in desolate mountain regions, rather than, as in a juster world, in city streets.

It was really too bad about the Trolls, reasoned they themselves (if they had been capable of reasoning). They were an independent and merely well meaning tribe. They claimed not to be aligned with any evil nations. They were just content to do their own thing, mining on mindlessly through the ages. They had always mined, time out of mind, also back in those countries from which they had lately fled. They didn't need anybody insidiously to suggest that they band together more closely or declare themselves as an established mining community. Still less did they require any cobolds or gnomes or goblins to initiate in their mines, if not minds, an impulse toward proclaim-

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ing themselves a labor union. And certainly the idea of going on active strike was the inspiration of the trolls alone. Wasn't it?

Thus would Frumple and Ankle have argued had they been capable of consecutive thought. As it was, they reached the same general conclusions by means of grunts and growls. They were a couple of misfits who were known to lack relish for the usual digging activities of daily life in trolldom. They might do better as trigger-happy lookout guards.

"Well, hurry up," went the sparkling repartee. "Get up there."

"Blither said —"

"Gate mustn't ever be deserted."

"Watch tower gotta have trolls in it at all times."

"Yeah. To keep a look-out."

"Hurry!"

"I'm hurryin'!" Ankle continued to scurry up the rungs of the ladder. "Don't wanna fall down and break my durn neck."

Frumple, the older, larger, and managerial troll, prodded the rump of his mate with a stick. When the two had reached the top of the tower they stared off in both directions along the road, looking for any suspicious traffic from the direction of the "Emerald" City. Due to the lie of the mountains and valleys the road ran east and west just here and of course the trolls couldn't tell in which of *those* directions the capital might lie.

"I see somep'n!" said Frumple, pointing.

"I don't see nothin'."

"Just comin' round the bend."

"What is it you see? You ain't seein' things?"

"Now don't you make a fool of me!"

"I don't see a thing around that bend."

"Now they're back o' that stand o' trees."

The lookout trolls had done well to look in both directions, for it was not from that of the Emerald City but from the opposite side that, briefly and indistinctly, a strange procession had come into view. It consisted of weary trolls, three in number, and ready-to-drop Caresso-pigs (two).

Yes, it was Numskul, Druid, Cheepix, Nilnul, and Wee.

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

After the night in the vineyard barn the kidnap party had had an exhausting long trek up hill and down dale And through the dreary great Rain Forest. It was a toss-up whether the pigs or the trolls were more fed up with the expedition by now. They were drenched through and through, starved, and suffering from worn-out feet. All the captors' mental energy had gone into keeping their legs moving and the pigs from escaping.

Too late the leader, Numskul, had an idea. The new mines guard tower had already been sighted when he said, "Look, if we bring home these pigs we're going to be expected to share them—with all the other trolls. Now follow me!"

With that he ducked, under cover of the purplery, off the road and into the brush. "Not much farther," he said to the pigs assuringly, but if that was a threat or a promise they never learned. Beyond speaking now, they trailed after him into the blackberry brambles.

Nor had the fairy band, instructed by Queen Lurline to keep the kidnappers under surveillance, slackened their trust. Invisibly they pursued the group, hovering silently in the air a few yards above and behind the walkers. They duly followed as the party under Numskul's leadership made a beeline for what

appeared to be an old mine entrance no longer in use.

Numskul developed his scheme as the pignappers hustled their victims through the undergrowth, parted the weeds and creepers, and thrust the captives through the cave-like mouth of the old workings. It was here they would deposit the prize.

"We can tell the others our hunting expedition turned out to be zilch. We didn't find anything worth eating, certainly nothing worth bringing home just roots and nuts and berries."

A cohort chimed in. "So we keep the pork here in the mine 'til it's time to eat them? I feel like that'd be pretty soon."

Meanwhile, Ankle at last having been convinced that Frumple had seen something, something that auspiciously did not continue in normal fashion to pass along the road, the two look-out trolls worriedly climbed back down from the tower. They needed to investigate.

They hurried across the broken terrain to the copse which had screened the ducking-aside of the oncoming road party. Once among the trees they hastened forward on tiptoe. Nobody spoke until Frumple broke the silence to say, "Shh!"

"I never said nothin'."

"Then don't. Keep your trap shut. I'll do the same. Don't want to scare 'em off."

The kidnapper trolls had paused at the mine entrance only long enough to let their eyes adjust to the relative absence of light. Native dwellers underground, they could see in the dark. Such was not the case with the caresso-pigs, who stumbled along wondering how it would end. Blind and terrified, prodded by their captors, they emitted the most pitiful gag-muffled squeals of fright. Deep into the mine tunnel the group penetrated and presently took one of the many branching galleryways.

The pursuing fairies had divided into two units, one of which went to summon emergency help from animals of the surrounding fields, forest, and mountainside. The rest flew along to keep the hostages in sight, a task by no means easy even for fairies. Normally they could see by virtue of the light they themselves

gave out; only now, for reasons of prudence, they were keeping invisible.

The 'advance' party of trolls persevered until they were far enough back along the galleries to feel they need no longer fear discovery by chance passers-by Frumple and Ankle were, however, not chance pursuers. They had arrived in time to see the caresso-pigs shoved into the mine entrance. Now they hurried after astonishingly soundlessly.

Finally Numskul's group called a halt. *They* were making enough noise to mask the tiptoe sounds of anyone else. They took the gags off Wee and Nilnul. No matter how loud they might shriek now the pigs could no longer be heard at the mouth of the mine.

In fact, Wee had stopped her squealing and sobbing. She had decided to take the Stoic approach. Nilnul did the talking for them. He said, "You had better not harm us or Glinda the Good will get after you."

"Glinda the Snood?" mocked the trolls and laughed coarsely.

"We're just gonna make smoked hams out of you, that's all," foretold Numskul. "Isn't that what good swine-flesh, is for?" He laughed again and again the other trolls joined in.

"You ought to let my sister go, at least."

"What, as a sucking-pig, without an apple in its mouth? She's too rare a delicacy for that." Wee just cringed and fell into a fit of the shivers. Meanwhile Nilnul was thinking furiously. There must be some way to outwit these criminal idiots. He said, "If you won't eat us or abuse us, my sister and I might be able to help you in your gem-mining."

Further guffaws. "What do hogs know about mining? For starters, what are you gonna stand on while you wield a pick with your front feet?"

"We wouldn't try to *dig* for them, amongst rock, but we can scent out where the best-quality stones are. For instance, I can tell you that there are still some top-quality gemstones in this old mine shaft."

The trolls went all solemn. If there was one thing they liked

better than ham, it was top-quality gemstones. "Just think," soliloquized one; "we might have eaten you and never known you could find amethysts for us."

"I'm very quick," said Wee, finally breaking her silence. "I can find gems faster than any of my siblings. But first I'd have to have something to eat. I'm awfully hungry."

"That's right," agreed Numskul grudgingly. "They, haven't had anything to eat in three days. We really ought to fatten them up until we decide what to do with them."

"Do with them'?" spoke an unfamiliar voice. It was Frumple. The pursuers had caught up with their renegade fellows. "You've got to turn them over to us, that's what. Otherwise we run you in."

"You and who else?!" Numskul tried to brazen it out.

While the trolls quarreled, finally coming to blows, the now de-gagged and unbound caresso-pigs felt about in the dark for a clue to which way they might try to steal away. What with the trolls' preoccupation there seemed little to fear from their direction, but what *other* direction among the branching galleries could the pigs take, all blind as they were, without simply ending deeper inside the heart of the mountain than they already were?

Suddenly, as if by magic, aid appeared. Well, it *was* magic. It was the guardian fairies who, as soon as the caresses had blundered past a bend in the passage, relit themselves and appeared to the pigs in all their firefly glory.

"Quick!" whispered Moth. "Follow our light." And she flew off, leading the way further through the maze of mine galleries, onward and ever downward through the rich purple air.

C H A P T E R F O R T Y

Acting Queen Fattywiggins sat on the Throne of Oz and tapped her foot spasmodically. She had been there almost continuously since Ozma had left town. She didn't want a moment of her being Regent of Oz to get away from her. To leave the seat royal of that majestic land to do anything mundane like eating or sleeping would have seemed a sin to her. Luckily there was a tiny retiring room a few feet away behind a drape so she did not need to keep any utensils of the bath beside the throne.

She had early learned to keep some of her cronies about her so that she did not become too bored during the long hours in which nobody came to crave an audience. These included, first and foremost, her companion of past adventures, Xavier Jaxon. He came to assume nearly a role of Prime Minister to the Acting Queen and ran errands for her that she could not afford to leave the throne to do herself.

Another constant attendant was Serena, the Sweetly Singing Seamstress. The harpist now left her instrument permanently set up in the throne room and there during many hours of the day beautiful melancholy Celtic lays enchanted the air. At other times she stitched away on orders for gowns that had come to

her both before and after her arrival in the capital.

Then of course the customary celebrities of the Court of Oz very often dropped in to keep their unlikely sometime sovereign entertained or brought up to date on current events. Among these were Scraps, the Patchwork Girl, and the Shaggy Man. Jack Pumpkinhead, the Tin Woodman, and the Scarecrow paid protocol calls when they arrived in town to attend the Birthday Ball. They were more than a little exercised to find a delightful tub of lard sitting on the chair that usually contained a honey-haired fairy the angels named "Ozma".

The Scarecrow was there today, along with the regulars, as Fattyw held her usual morning policy meeting. Restlessly she thumbed through her notes. "Xavier," she addressed that courtier, "have yon a progress report for me on the setting up of the communications poles?"

The Scarecrow pricked up, as well as he could, his painted ears. Communications poles? "Which communications poles were those, Your Corpulence?" (This honorific had been selected as the most suitable in view of the Acting Queen's physique.)

Minister Jaxon took the word. "Her Corpulence deemed it wise to augment speed of communications in the land by authorizing the erection of a network of telegraph and telephone poles throughout Oz."

"You had telephone poles erected in Oz?" said the Scarecrow, horrified, and not bothering with any honorifics.

"It was to go along with my essay on the beauty of telephone and telegraph poles," explained Queen Fatty urbanely.

"How could you?! Without Ozma's consent," cried the Scarecrow.

"It was just for the sake of art. As for Ozma, she never even bothered to look at or listen to my essay," said the ruler pro-tem, who had a grudge to nurse. "But when she put me in charge here she obviously meant me to do whatever I liked. By setting up the poles I saw to it that my ideas didn't go to waste."

"Dear, oh dear," mourned the Scarecrow. "What will our dear sovereign say when she finds out?" But perhaps, he thought

privately, Ozma would make it back in time to put a stop to the desecration before many of the poles were planted. He protested only weakly, "I should have thought your unicycle messenger service was sufficient to deal with the problem of fast communications. Look how speedily they carried the word far and wide about a matter even as trivial as the kidnapping of the caresso-pigs—"

All the courtiers shushed him wildly, but it was too late.

"Kidnapping of Caresso-pigs!" screamed Fattywiggins. "My good Scarecrow, *whatever* are you on about?"

The poor Scarecrow sank through the floor shamefast. It was left to Xavier Jaxon to convey the sad word to the regent. "It's true. Princess Ozma meant to keep it from you. Two of your Caresso pals were stolen by trolls. Fairies brought the news here to the palace, but the kidnap party was also sighted by more than one agent of the unicycle service and they passed on the word wherever they went."

"Stolen!" sobbed Fatty in a broken voice. "Stolen..."

Then she amazed everyone by getting up off the throne for almost the first time in days and rushing to the corner where she had thrown down her roller skates. Seizing them up she pulled open, unaided, the doors to the antechamber and ran out, followed a moment later by all her court as soon as they grasped what she was doing.

"But, Your Corpulence," Jaxon called after her in the corridor, "where are you going?!"

All Fattywiggins answered was a gasping "My pigs! I must go to them!"

The procession streamed down the hallway toward the outer door, from which, following her recent accidents, Acting Queen Fattywiggins had had laid down a smooth wooden ramp of gradual gradience leading to the great outdoors. Here she plopped down on the sill and fastened on her skates.

Her counselors tried to reason with her, pointing out that the very (actual) Queen of Oz herself was attempting to deal with the problem of the shanghaied shoats, and what could a

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mere mortal do more?

Fattyw would have none of it. Without even designating who should keep the Throne warm against her return she stood up, gave a violent foot-shove, and sped away down the ramp.

Her flight was splendid but brief. It ended by all eight of the wheels of her skates skidding and whirling off and away, leaving the skater to make her way on as best she could on the naked 'insteps' of the skates alone. This she did by flying bottom side up off the ramp and coming down head first in a herbaceous border.

Fortunately (for the future history of Oz) the landing knocked her out. Fattywiggins may have been a fathead but the layer of fat was not sufficient to cushion the blow and prevent her losing consciousness. The courtiers streaming after her gathered her up approximately and, after the shocked and sorrowing Xavier Jaxon had unstrapped the skates, they carried her tenderly in solemn convoy back up the ramp.

"That's funny," said Xavier, examining the skates. He observed that all the screws intended to fix the wheels to the skates were missing. How amazing. It was a miracle that the skater had got as far as she had before the wheels fell off. What mystery was here?

In the event, Fattyw's oblivion did not last long. Perhaps it was the noise that helped to restore her to consciousness. As her attendants were carrying her along the hall past the ballroom, she suddenly came to. All memory of her former preoccupations blown away (as often happens in cases of knock-out blows to the head), she cried, "'Whatever's that frightful din?!"

The procession stood still to listen. "Why, Your Corpulence," supplied Serena the harpist, "that's the palace band practising. Actually, I ought to be with them myself."

"But why are they making such a hideous racket?" complained the patient. "Oh, my aching head."

"Why, that's the musique moderne your grace was so good as to suggest that the band please Princess Ozma with on her

birthday.”

“Well, tell them to stop it—at once! It’s too dreadful. As for that Kapellmeister, he can get lost. I never want to see—or, even more, hear him again.”

As it turned out, that was the end of the Herr Kapellmeister’s brief brilliant engagement at the court of Oz. But he had already had his revenge on the chubby buttinski who had been his nemesis at the Palace of Magic.

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

Mombi was composing another poison-pen poem to send to 'her sovereign' (hmpf!). Perhaps it is as well, for the sake of the interested reader, to publish it here—just in case it never gets sent. The sorceress was in a sad mixed-up mood. She didn't know what she ought to be feeling in the current phase of her love-hate relationship to her foster son/daughter. Despite rebuffs should she persevere in her secret campaign to prove to herself that she could do good? Or should she allow the old ennui and self-loathing that were the natural result of so many years of being wicked to resume their sway?

Her veiled confession went thus:

"I am so tired of being human.
How? how can I molt this skin
And rise to a height above
The weight I call my flesh?
Freedom from my cage:
When? when will I achieve it?
When shall I be ageless,
Without age?
I am so sorry to be human.

What? what will people say
Of her who tires of being human
And seeks the grave without delay?
Strange that I cannot feel a soul.
Why? why would it seem a blessing?
Will this too be called wickedness?:
To live for the day I die."

Then the witch heard the bell-pull go again and she had to dash the tears from her eyes.

Queer. She was not expecting any guests. She had just seen off one lot, the carrion crows who periodically kept her supplied with gobbets of gossip and bits of raw news from at home and abroad.

She went to her door and there were the Caresso-pigs, dressed again in all their finery. "What's this?" asked the witch indulgently.

"Oh, Miss Mombi," explained Beenie, unaccustomedly taking the lead, "we couldn't sleep for mourning over Lazlodes and worrying about Wee and Nilnul. We can't just sit around at home, not knowing. We have get to be *doing* something. Have you got any ideas?"

"Besides," added Twee, "we were curious about the treat you were planning for us."

"Oh, that," said Mombi with a deprecatory snort. "It's all ready. It can be partaken of at any time. But come in. I'll mix up a tub of swill for you. You might as well spend the afternoon." So saying, she laid aside her manuscript.

After the pigs had enjoyed their slops Homer reverted to the topic of how to pass the time profitably. "We feel we have to be helping," he explained. "Of course Queen Ozma will rescue our stolen siblings all in good time but it's hardly fair for us to just sit around waiting for the good news to come. What can we do? What would you suggest?"

"All I can think of is what you tried before: to send to that other witch, Glinda—"

Here all the pigs broke in—and broke out in tears. “Oh, that’s where Lazlodes was heading that time when... !” Cleo broke down, and the party broke up: the Caressos left the table and threw themselves in various poses of weeping abandon on the floor, the settee, the window sills. Twee even collapsed in sobs in the swill tub.

Mombi let the swine enjoy the cathartic and curative effect of grief for half an hour, then she threw a chart on the now cleared refreshment table, passed out handkerchiefs, and bade her guests rejoin her. “I’ve just had word,” she related, “as to where the Sorceress of the South has relocated. It seems we can’t manage our-own affairs here in the north. The so-called ‘Good Witch of the North’ has been phased out as a practitioner of white magic. Any black magic needed I could have supplied, but I won’t! The carrion crows told me I’m already being accused of instigating this wave of Purplitude that’s sweeping over the country. I protest my innocence...”

The caresso-pigs had dried their eyes and were staring at Mombi, mouths agape. The sight restored her to a sense of what she was about. She ceased her diatribe. “But never mind that,” she proceeded. “You want to get to the Red Witch’s? Look here—” The hex indicated for them on the map of Gillikinland their present location and its orientation in relation to the mines and headquarters of the Trolls and to the new temporary residence of Sorceress Glinda.

“Presumably Ozma’s still in litigation with the trolls over the release of the hostages,” reasoned Mombi. “But you could cut across the mountains to Glinda’s tower without encountering the girl ruler’s entourage. I know a short cut. See here...?”

Her gnarled old finger traced the route. “It’s pretty wild up in those hills—but I’ll come with you part of the way. I’ve got business up there, as it happens. See? ‘Salt Sea Hot Springs’? We can go that far together... And by the way, on your return, mind you stop at the Springs...”

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

The trolls continued to fight it out just long enough to lose what it was they were fighting about. Suddenly all five of them stopped and looked about them in the (to them, just relative) dark.

“Oh, curses!” cried one.

“Yeah!” answered Numskul. “The swine are getting away! We’ve got to stop them, or there go our dreams of picked pigs’ feet,” he shouted.

“Quick. After them!” yelled all the others and ran off in, naturally, the wrong direction. Nobody had in fact seen the caresso-pigs steal away and, even had the trolls been capable of imagining, they could not have imagined that Nilnul and Wee would penetrate further *into* the mine, where even the dumbest troll had realized the pigs were blind. With an erring sense of the actuality of things the trolls dashed away as one along the winding passage back toward the mine entrance.

They burst out into the daylight, in which, blinking, they peered to all sides.

“Dang! We’ve lost them! Now no pork pies,” ejaculated Numskul. But that was not the limit of his surprises. Right in the middle of his speech he was struck on the head by a rain

of nuts.

The trolls gaped, stared around, and up. There, ranged on a nearby tree limb, nicely out of reach, a row of squirrels and chipmunks were hurling acorns at them. Merrily they jittered and taunted, "Get lost, you creeps!" "Your party has gone." "They went thataway!" and a few of the rodents paused in their nut-casting to point misleadingly toward the west.

Suddenly a flight of arrows cleft the air. Many of the missiles truck on target and the trolls were gingered up by a sensation as of red-hot needles in their flesh. It was the porcupines! shooting their quills with unerring aim out of the underbrush.

The troll quintet waited for no further urgings but set out at a run, psychologically, assisted by the sight of the rear quarters of any number of black and white skunks with tails stiffly erect and glands at the ready. An abhorrence of stench lent wings to the heels of the discriminating but disconcerted trolls. And roundabout them as they fled they heard the tinkling laughter of invisible fairies.

It seemed no time before they had gained the road of lilac bricks. They bolted out of the copse just in time to be run over by the forward-barreling bicycles of three ponderous cows. The trolls fell down, the cows fell off, and the fairies fell over, laughing.

Then quickly the latter made themselves visible and flew in a body to the handlebars of Queen Ozma, who braked abruptly and granted them an audience, all ranged as they were, from left to right, at her fingertips.

"Oh, Your Majesty!" gasped Cobweb, leader of the detail appointed to alert the forest creatures. "You're just in time! These wretched trolls have kidnapped two of the darling Caresso-pigs. We've managed to direct the villains back on the path of virtue but it looks as if the pigs themselves have got lost in the shuffle! Maybe you could find out...?"

Gravely Ozma signaled Wizard Diggs, General Battles, Private Langley, even good Farmer Brownthum about her and took counsel. Even without command the members of the Honor

Guard had jumped from their velocipedes and overpowered the crestfallen trolls. Now they brought them to the girl ruler and caused them to kneel before her cycle and to swear allegiance to her lips, her eyes, her hair.

By now the trolls were rather fatigued with their own skulduggery and they submitted readily enough. questioned by the Wizard they confessed all and revealed all. Yes, the erstwhile kidnapped pigs were somewhere in the mine shaft, wandering who knew where. No, there were no further trolls in attendance upon there. Yes, the ancient mine workings were extensive. No, it would not be an easy job tracing the errant swine.

Now it was breaking-up time, there on the open road. Princess Ozma told off General Battles to take in charge the sinning trolls and march them back to the Emerald City, there to install them in the town jail until summary justice might be meted out. Private Langley and up to six of the palace guard would go in that detail.

The princess gave her hand to Farmer Brownthum. "The dear cows came in handy after all, did they not?" she congratulated him. "Now you'll be wanting to get them on home. No, keep the cowcycles. They may still speed your journey — and perhaps be useful on future occasions."

The farmer insisted on serving a refreshing quaff of plain, mint, or chocolate milk all round before leading the lowing herd away o'er the lea, still pedaling slowly.

Thus far Ozma had not succeeded in her intention of getting rid of her two unsatisfactory underlings, Draxton and Lapstart. Now a fiendish plan entered her mind: she would send them back to the main entrance of the mine workings passed half an hour previously. There the circling picket line had informed her in surly tones that of course nothing had been seen of any hogs stolen by righteous trolls. However, when pressed, they did admit grudgingly that the two watch-tower guards had run off in a suspicious manner shortly before. Ozma and her party had been following up the lead when fallen over by the fleeing kidnappers.

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"Now you understand," she said to blinking Lapstart and coughing Draxton, "you are to make your way in by hook or by crook to the presence of the chief trolls and declare our ultimatum: back they go to work, gem shipments to be resumed—and no questions will be asked.

"Otherwise—" Here Ozma made a most uncharacteristic hand gesture suggesting a knife cutting off a head. She did not articulate even to herself whether she envisaged troll—or guardsman—heads falling.

As these deliberations and delegations were dispatched the weary crowd of cyclists had mostly descended from their vehicles and sought surcease of striving by stretching out beside the road. As the various departing groups made their way off, the puissant Queen turned to her slimmed-down entourage and said, "The rest, that love me, rise and follow me."

C H A P T E R F O R T Y - T H R E E

Fairy Queen Lurline rose from the waves like Venus, though not nude, and only slightly soupy. Needless to say, her sudden apparition created a sensation along the Ugliest Troll and the little fish. She soon calmed their fears and then said, "A word with you, sir," to the gawking troll.

"I have heard—and overheard—that you are in fact a very amiable troll, though so ugly. How do you account for that fact, if I may enquire?"

"It isn't 'though so ugly', Your Feyness," answered the troll willingly enough, "but rather 'because so ugly'. My kind are not noted at the best of times as a physically attractive race, but *my* plainness turned out to be so intense that it had my fellows retching all the time. For the peace of their stomachs I had to be expelled.

"Now all along I had tried my best to be troll-like curmudgeonly with the best of them. Perhaps my heart was not in it but I did try. It was exhausting work. 'Ugly is as ugly does,' said the others, but I must have been sending mixed signals. I looked more dreadful than the most but I didn't *do* nearly dreadfully enough. They didn't know what to make of me.

"I was allowed to tag along when the mass migration to Oz

took place but immediately afterwards, as the tribe was settling into caves in the various highland ranges of the Purple land, I was sent missing. They took me down to a deep-most bowel of the earth and let me go, with a warning not to darken their door again.

"At first, strangely, I felt only relief. It was so delightful not to have to struggle against my nature any more. I needn't be surly to strangers or suspicious of kindness. I needn't toady to superiors or bark at subordinates or practice deceit to get ahead. I didn't have to raise my voice or employ violence or bite off heads, figuratively or literally. I never *could* develop a taste for heads.

"So now a wave of bliss overwhelmed me. Borne upon it, I drifted off along the pansy-colored cavern passages. With my native untraviolet sight I could make out shapes well enough. As time went on I did get a bit hungry or thirsty, but then I would lick at the cave walls which dripped a tasty brine: corundum salts, I think it was.

"It got a bit lonely, but what would you? It would not be less lonely to huddle in some cavern nook and feel sorry for myself. I plodded onward up and down the winding underground ways. I could not have what you might call adventures, although a time or two I had to negotiate some narrow cleft among rocks or swing across a gaping chasm. But mostly there was nothing to see or any creature to speak to.

"Then one day—or night? How could I tell?—it seemed to me the dark light grew faintly less opaque. As I wandered on I grew sure of it. From somewhere was coming an amethystine glow and every turn of the cavern passage showed it brighter.

"I was now at the lowest level of the interminable chain of tunnel-like caves. That 'deep bowel' of the earth where my fellows had abandoned me now seemed by comparison ethereally high and far exalted in some ultimate rock pinnacle.

"For now I had come to the Chamber of the Crown!

"Looking back I feel it must have been. When I read in that volume of violet vellum of the great Crown of Love and

Wisdom it all seemed so reminiscent. From my own memory, alas, I cannot say.

"Some time elapsed. Some space as well. I think they must have done, for the next thing I can surely recall is that I was somewhere on level rock and the jewel glow behind me was fading. It grew darker again, I roamed on, and some time, late or soon? I stumbled through a rocky defile and found myself in this book-lined grotto beside the sea. It seemed to me that I had reached some place that was an end, a finality."

The Ugliest Troll ceased speaking and there was silence in the sea cave, troubled only by the mild slosh of soup against the rocks.

Lurline had not come much forwarder in her scheme of learning how to deal with trolls by making friends with a less forbidding member of the race. Instead a wholly new and different preoccupation seized her. The fairy found herself consumed by a vast curiosity about that so-called Crown of Love and Wisdom.

She knew that she herself had had a very great role to play in the original formation of the fairyland of Oz. It stood to reason that she herself had had something to say about the creation and placement of the fabulous jewel. Granted that she, or anybody, would not now, by the very nature of the gem, be able to recall anything about it. But that would make it all the more of a thrill to see—again...

The Queen of the Fairies thought back upon her obligations. She was to pacify the obstreperous trolls and to make Gillikinland safe for swine, but were those tasks so pressing she could not spare a day—surely, not more?—to see this marvelous Crown? She thought not.

The job of persuading the Ugliest Troll to lead her through the caverns to that mysterious chamber full of lavender light turned out to be no job at all. His only regret was at having to leave behind his beloved friend, the little fish.

"Don't think of me," whistled the fish generously. "It will be one more glamorous story for you to tell me on your return," he

urged.

The little fish waved his apricot-colored fins in farewell as fairy queen and ugly troll made their way to the rear of the grotto. There they entered a passageway strewn with dimly scintillating amethyst boulders.

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

Acting Queen Fattywiggins was back on her throne, her head in a sling and with one hand assisting wearily in the holding of it upright. For worlds she wouldn't have confessed to anyone that she was sick to death of being Ruler (even pro-tem) of Oz.

There was nothing she could do. She was not, no matter how great a knowitall, a mistress of magic and without magic she saw no way of restoring her pig friends to freedom, coping with the troublesome troll multitudes, or preventing the empurplement of all Oz.

Sadly she called her aide Xavier Jaxon to her. Tagging after him came the indefatigable seamstress Serena, dispenser of soothing melody by voice and strings. Those two seemed to be seeing a lot of each other and not minding it, despite the disparity in age. The Regent wondered what Guardsman Langley would think of that when presently he returned to court.

"Xavier, my good friend," queried Fattyw, "what ever became of those eggs the old woman presented to the Queen? Wasn't there something about their being magic?"

The eggs had created a mild sensation about the Palace, and Fattywiggins and Xavier Jaxon had heard all about them. Jaxon had in fact been called in by ruler Ozma to help deal with the

question of the disposition of the ovate gift. It was he who had suggested that a sandbox in the palace conservatory be set aside for their preservation. It was not known whether the eggs were meant to hatch or what, but Ozma concurred in the belief that a mild even temperature, neither too cold nor too hot, might be the most advantageous for the well-being of the eggs.

"Something of the sort," Jaxon confirmed the impression of his sovereign. "Provokingly, their donor didn't specify what one was to do with them. I think the Princess said she was told that the eggs 'would be of help in the crisis' and 'assist' as a 'measure' against 'purplitude'."

"Gosh," sighed Fattywiggins. "If I could just do something about the purplitude, that would be—well, something."

"Yes, indeed," agreed her prime minister. "And I think the Professor" (by this he meant the wizard, O.Z. Diggs) "went so far as to point out that there was, in any case, no harm in accepting the gift. In a pinch, if all else broke down, they might be eaten. He said that guinea-egg omelette is rather tasty."

Fattywiggins meditated. "Do you suppose those eggs will really do what the old woman said they would?"

"It's against all scientific probability," replied the laboratory technician, prepared to instruct, "that eggs could have any effect on a phenomenon like the discoloration of a landscape together with everything in it. Remember that both fairy Ozma's and witch Glinda's magic, at any rate from a distance, was unable to bring about any amelioration. It seems to be a force of nature, almost impervious to the action of magic. Viewed from that perspective, how could a few poultry eggs have any effect on the purpleness, let alone put an end to it?"

"But this is Oz," protested the rotund ruler, "and anything can happen!"

"True. But such things must have a *little* reasonableness and likelihood or how will anyone believe in them?"

"That's so," the pretty seamstress, Serena, ventured to put in. "If someone said, 'They threw the eggs in the air and caught them again and then all the purplitude faded away,' I for one

could have trouble believing it.”

“I suppose you’re right,” agreed Fattyw. Then she brightened. “But it wouldn’t do any harm to try.” Startled, her attendants followed loyally after as the near-invalid teetered gingerly down from her throne and began to make her way toward the doors. Xavier Jaxon carried the acting queen’s beslung head for her, as gently as if it were a fragile egg itself.

At the green-room sandbox Fattywiggins played Easter with almost a return of her old insouciance. When she had found three of the big purple eggs and they had been drawn out into the light, the girl commenced to juggle them, while Serena and Xavier looked all around attentively to see if anything grew less purple.

“Rats!” muttered Jaxon after three minutes and no change.

The expletive was enough to put Fatty off her stroke. She dropped one of the eggs, which landed with a luscious and immense splash on her foot. Far from turning everything back to green again it turned a large portion of the floor of the conservatory bright yellow. Fattywiggins dissolved in sobs but did at least remember not to throw down the other two eggs in pique.

While the Acting Queen ministered to her tears the other two, rueful, solicitously returned the remaining eggs to their sandy nest. “Lots of things seem unscientific at first,” pontificated Xavier, “but if we rely upon our instincts we sometimes find they will give us a hunch in the right direction.”

“What does your instinct tell you now, Xavier?” asked Serena.

“If we follow the old woman’s instructions, such as they were: to have the eggs handy in moments of crisis, we stand to lose nothing and perchance to gain much.”

At least her counselor’s words gave Fattywiggins something to ponder upon in hours to come. As she dabbed at her shoe she issued a solemn edict, declaring that the eggs were to be preserved and carefully maintained and, come what might, were neither to be boiled nor scrambled.

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

Queen Ozma of Oz bade goodbye to her bicycle for the immediate nonce. Though the cycles provided fleetness, in one way she was not sorry to give up their use just now. Bicycling did have this disadvantage over against walking: it was a loner affair. You could not, as in walking, engage in deep (and often) comforting discussion with a companion. For some time now Ozma and the Wizard and the others she might have shared her thoughts with had whizzed along each separately. It would be good now to be able to confer moment by moment with her dear supporters as she stepped out upon what she somehow sensed would be the climax of her quest. Fairy ruler, helpful adherents, and fairies by the throng left the impromptu parking lot in the woods just as soon as Ozma had enjoined willing wolverines and ready raccoons to keep an eye on the bicycles and to let no one near them who might seek to do them any mischief. "We'll want them for our return to the Amethyst City, you see." And all the badgers, porcupines, and chipmunks nodded sagely. They understood.

The wild trappings of many trolls had left a path clearly legible in the brush and it was not many minutes before Ozma and her party came up to the doorway of the ancient mine work-

ings. The princess paused just a moment under the dilapidated planking of the entrance framework, took a deep breath, and plunged in.

Wizard Diggs brought a powerful pocket torch from his black bag. This in combination with the lovely lavender effulgence given off by the fairy host who at this time switched on their lighting provided all the illumination that would be wanted.

At first the way to go was evident. There was but one tunnel leading into the mountain and the passage remained one as far as the rock chamber where the troll bandits and the two Caresso-pigs had parted company. There a few minutes were lost in determining which of three branching galleries of the quarry their quarry might have gone off along.

It was one of the Princess' honor-guardsmen who spotted in the dust the traces of the tickled pigs' feet. 'Tickled' because the shoats had been free at last! from terror-struck bondage and their tracks showed they had fairly scampered in making them.

"They must have had light," commented Ozma, "to have been able to make their way so evidently confidently."

"Yes, indeed, Your Grace," reassured Cobweb. "Moth and the others will have lit themselves up to full candle-power the moment they were out of sight of the trolls."

At the speed Nilnul and Wee had been traveling it now became clear that catching up with them might not be the quick accomplishment Ozma had counted on. She supposed that the escapees had at most a good hour's head start, but as the hours spun on and no sign of their nearness was found the girl ruler came to the conclusion that the two pigs must be going on at near-express-train rapidity. There was nothing for it but continuously to increase her own speed. The pursuers found themselves galloping along one tunnel and racing down another.

One sharp change in the nature of the surroundings occurred when the search party had been following the pig tracks for about four hours (and outside night must have fallen). The smooth, slightly descending, and sufficiently broad miner-made tunnel broke through into, and ended at, a system of. interconnecting

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caverns and underground river courses. A rough staircase hacked in the rock led down to the amethyst shore of a magnificent subterranean lake.

There was clearly no way to go but down. Yes, sure enough, at the bottom of the stairs they picked up the trail of pig trotters again. The track led to the brink of the lake and stopped.

This was a facer.

"The dear pigs can't have plunged into the water!" exclaimed Ozma. "It hardly stands to reason. Right here is where we should have caught up with them; stopped by the nature of things."

"Hm," said the Wizard thoughtfully. He had been pensive for some time, plunged into meditation by something he, as a scientist, had observed while the others had not. It was the thickness of the air.

"Perhaps your grace has not noticed," he ventured cautiously. "I think it may be a case of another 'nature of things'. You are aware, I'm sure, of the euphoria we feel...?"

"Euphoria'? Why, yes, I do feel quite euphoric—and not a bit tired either, though we've been tramping for hours."

"It's the air, your majesty. You can't see it, of course, as more than a faint heliotrope hue about us, but it is of a very concentrated blend of oxygen and nitrogen. We're breathing much richer air than we would on the surface. It produces that feeling of well-being. But if I mistake me not the air grows thicker yet as we go lower and just here we reach the threshold where air becomes in truth liquid. That lake before us is not one of water. It is liquid air."

"How fascinating! How strange. But it does look like water..." breathed Ozma, awed.

"Touch it, your grace, if I may advise. Touch the surface of the lake."

Gracefully the little fairy leaned and touched. She drew back her hand with almost a scream. "It burns me!" she cried.

"Not 'burns', my dear," said the Wizard, now avuncular. "Freezes. Its coldness is so superconcentrated it strikes as a burning sensation. But neither does it freeze you in actual fact.

Freezing normally only occurs at the junction line of two blends of elements, in most cases air in contact with water. But by now we are all air! We have breathed this concentrated effluvium for so many hours that it has in some degree replaced the water in our systems. We are like fish who live and flourish in Arctic seas, who if taken from the water would freeze solid in an instant on contact with the frigid air. As long as we stay bathed in 'super' air I believe we cannot suffer harm from it."

"How marvelous," breathed the queen again. It was all 'breathing' now; the water in everyone's system had become air, while the air that filled the lake seemed water.

"Air is our element now," summed up Diggs. "This must be the essence of the Purplitude that has swept over Oz, pervading everything, as air does when allowed to. Being all air we can suffer no ill from air. If Your Majesty wishes..."

Here the Wizard put a foot in the lake — and drew it out again, his shoe apparently no wetter than before. "Shall we go a promenade in the lake?"

Ozma hesitated, still so surprised, but presently she walked in stately grace into the flowing-air basin, and all her train followed.

Under the purple cool translucent wave everything looked lighter, brighter, clearer. They saw with the eyes of creatures born to the deep and moved as freely. They did not exactly swim but strode, with flowing sweeping seven-league strides. And sounds carried, more bell-like if that might be, than ever they had done in the little-resonant air of surface Earth.

"This is what the Caressos were moved to do," surmised Queen Ozma.

"I dare say," concurred Diggs; "advised by their guardian spirits, the fairies."

In truth, it was not long before the party came on the pigling pair asleep in a great cup-like formation in the 'under-air' rock. Exhilarating as the fluid air might be on all animal tissues, the stress of the days just past had overcome the pig siblings after all. They had fallen to profound rest. Round them in the

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midnight-violet liquid drifted their fairy guardians, half of them too asleep.

“Moth?” whispered Titania, bringing back to consciousness her sister fay. “So this is where you got to...”

C H A P T E R F O R T Y - S I X

Glinda the Good had put in a most accomplishful morning and part of the afternoon drawing up an inventory and plan of her new residence. By now, nearly a week after her arrival, she had had time to go over every inch of the estate, except for following to their ultimate end the strangely extensive cellars of the building. Based on her researches, she had herself cartographed the property. Now she knew exactly what she had to deal with, what resources and amenities she could count on.

Curious about those cellars. She had an idea they had originally served as wine depositories for the abundant product of the region. Next week she must mount a little expedition to discover the full extent of them.

But now it was mid-afternoon and time for tea. A serving maid entered with the tea things and set them down upon a table destined for that use. While the girl was busy placing the tongs and tea-cosy a messenger was announced. It was an agent of the Unicycle Brigade.

"You have brought me word from the Princess Ozma," said Glinda.

"Yes, Your Magicity."

"What is your news?"

"Your Grace, the Princess orders me to inform you that she is dealing with the problem of the disturbance at the mines. She is hot on the trail of the purloined pigs and has sent the fell kidnappers to Coventry, that is, to the former 'Emerald City', under guard, there to await trial for their crime. She herself has pressed on to discover the pig victims who, though at liberty, are not yet exactly in safety."

Glinda placed two lumps of sugar in her teacup, manipulating the tongs most elegantly. More sweetening for her raspberry tea she did not require. Then she took a small bite from a muffin.

"Thank you for your message," she resumed the exchange. "Will you please tell Princess Ozma that I commend her action and thank her for her assistance in dealing with those problems that oppress the land. She should know that I am taking in hand the question of the pervading purplitude—although now that I am here in Gillikinland I no longer find the issue to be of such great gravity..." The sorceress ceased speaking, with just a faint expression of puzzlement lingering on her face.

"Is that all, Your Magicity?" enquired the messenger.

"Yes. You may go now and relay that message to the Princess Ozma."

Glinda was still in a starry state of mind, half forgetting her muffin, when the Minute Maid made a minute's appearance in the chamber. "The Caresso-pigs are here to wait upon Your Grace."

"Please send them in. I have news for them," said the sorceress and walked to the alcove where lay, enchained, the vast and invaluable Great Book of Records.

"There are five of them, madame," stated the confidential servant.

"Never mind. I can deal with that many," reassured Glinda. "Usher them in."

The Minute Maid went out and in a moment the five swine came scampering in, stumbling over their dresses. The girls both

wore hair ribbons in different colors, although they had no hair.

"You are Homer, Mark, Biff, Cleo, and Twee," said the witch with a welcoming smile.

"Oh, Your Sorceress!" cried Cleo, getting the honorific wrong, "how could you know that?"

"Simple," said Glinda simply and indicated the spread pages of the Great Book. "Is that all of you there are?"

"You tell us," piped Twee saucily.

Glinda referred to the page. "No, there are two more who stayed at home. They are Suze and Beenie."

"Three," corrected Biff. "There's Lazlodes. He stayed home forever." At this all the pigs burst into tears.

"I know," murmured the sorceress tenderly. "Yes, I know. And you have other sorrows. Two of your number have been kidnapped. But now I have good news for you. Nilnul and Wee are at liberty! Word has just come from our dear sovereign—"

"Oh, Your Magicity," cried Homer, getting it right. "That's what we've come about. How wonderful! Where are they? We want to go where they are!"

"The dear Queen is truly as great as they say," declared Twee, pulling on her hair ribbon.

"They also say you know everything that happens in the kingdom," said Homer, wanting to praise Glinda herself a little.

The witch brushed her nails on her lapel. "I do try to keep track of everyone as best I can," she admitted. "But now, how can I serve you further?"

"Like we said," put in Biff. "We want to go to Wee and Nilnul. Where are they? if you please."

"Oh," said Glinda. "That one's a bit harder. Actually the great book is a bit cryptic on that score. But it is known that our dear girl ruler is even now tracing the missing ones in the mines and caverns that underlie much of this region. I expect to hear further from her every moment."

All the caresso-pigs sighed with relief. "Then, summed up Homer, "we may even meet our sister and brother on the way home, depending on where Ozma comes up."

Glinda agreed. "You, and all of us, owe the fairies a lot," she reminded. "It seems they watched over the kidnapped ones throughout their captivity to make sure nothing *really* bad happened to them. Now it is our own native fairy, Princess Ozma, who is going to deliver them back to you."

"And so all our cares are overt" rejoiced Mark, "—though not, completely, our sadness."

"Nor, alas, your danger, I'm sorry to say." Glinda looked grave. "Furthermore I don't know what precautions can be taken to insure that you not be harassed in the future."

"Of course you realize that you are a very attractive family. You appeal very much to—um, a particular type of person."

"The type of person who'll eat pork," said Biff matter-of-factly.

"Er, yes, that is what I meant." The sorceress laughed nervously. Glinda didn't at all know the form of words to use to intimate to the caresses that they would do beautifully for smoked ham or that even she personally might be tempted if confronted with one of them piping hot from the oven with the crackling at a peak of perfection.

"If I could only work some magic spell that would keep away evil-doers," she pondered. "But I don't remember a single incantation that would serve as a specific against just pork-eaters—of whom, unfortunately, there are an inordinate number just in this region of Oz. Only yesterday I had to receive a delegation from Joe, King of the Uplanders, demanding to know what I planned to do to restore a plenitude of pork in Gillikinland."

What If Your Magicity were to turn us into something else equally viable," suggested thoughtful Homer, "but less immediately appealing as food? Maybe if we all became talking turnips or ambulatory augergines we'd be safe."

Glinda considered the proposal. "Indeed, that could be achieved. But I'm not sure that you would be any less attractive as vegetables. No," she continued upon maturer reflection, "we could not subject you to any such humiliation as that."

Mark, Biff, and Homer tended to agree. "I think we'd rather remain pigs despite hazards," was their consensus.

But Twee surprised them. "I want to be a watermelon," she chimed in merrily.

"Why a watermelon exactly?" enquired Glinda.

"Because I would have beautiful green stripes and be red inside," stated Twee, a bit surprised in her turn at the necessity for enunciating anything so obvious. "I'd want to be the seedless kind, of course," she went on, fantasizing freely. At her still tender age she had no ambition of becoming a mother, even of watermelons.

The others murmured appreciatively, understanding Twee's motivations. "This is how I would walk," elucidated the pigling female. Holding her breath Twee waddled a few steps at a rolling gait with belly distended and feet splayed out.

"It's true that watermelons are not as sought-after as pork," said Homer judiciously.

"Indeed, there may be something to be said for turning you into watermelons," concurred Glinda.

"But I wouldn't care to be one," protested Cleo quietly, smoothing down her velvet frock. "I'd rather be a cantaloupe or, in a pinch, a honeydew melon."

"In that case we might end up being known as the Cuddlefruits," prophesied Homer.

In this mood of mild (and healing) hilarity all the Caressopigs began to parade around with their sides puffed out and limbs kept as far as possible in the background as they sought to look like pears or pomegranates.

Suddenly a sound as of a great sigh and a wind like a great ghostly breath blew through the council chamber and sent the rich magenta drapes bellying too.

In a moment the hall was filled with a countless throng of fairies.

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

The amazement of the guardian fairy Moth may be imagined. "Titania!" she cried. "However did you get here? I thought you were in the Amethyst City preparing for the Fairy Fanfare and Fugue performance in honor of the well loved Ruler of Oz, who, by the way, I observe is in your company! Now how...?"

"I'll tell you later. Just now what we want, I think is 'not the cheese; we just want out of here'! Tell us, I pray; which is the way to the surface?"

"If only we knew! We've been seeking the way ourselves 'til we're distraught. The poor pigs are panicky to get back home, and we fairies are by no means happy stopping underground."

"What are the options?"

"We seem to have three choices: back the way we all came—"

"Oh, how boring," was the comment that, alas, escaped the lips of both one of the Honor Guardsmen and many of the fairies.

"Or we can go on down the course of the air river."

"That indeed is a possibility that ought to be considered," put in the Wizard.

"Or we can stay here and wait for somebody to notice we've gone missing and come and rescue us," Moth stated the remaining option.

"Alas, my dears," Ozma deigned to enter the discussion at last, "that choice is closed to me as puissant ruler or all Oz. I must be the captain of my fate, if you'll allow me."

"By all means, Your Majesty," the fairies, all 366 of them, said in chorus.

Afterwards there was nothing for it but to drift on, dreaming, down the stream of the always deeper-tending lake-river of fluid air.

And then, they thought, there came a change. Was it becoming ever so slightly less easy to stalk on through that fluid air? What did it mean when one of the guardsmen, on a whim, walked back up to the surface of the purple stream and, thrusting his upper body through, saw icicles hanging sharp and rigid from his hands, nose, and chin? "Ice!" he creaked in a splintery voice and speedily resubmerged.

"Now that *is* strange," commented the Wizard when the man had reported back. "You mean to say you were all ice?"

"I fear so, professor," answered the guardsman, not knowing what to make of his experience.

Ozma in her turn attracted the general attention, a thing easy for her to do at any time, by remarking, "What is that alluring glow I seem to spy down there full fathoms five?"

She pointed through the ice to where a faint lilac radiance, refracted a million times through ice crystals, struck on their sight.

Like a magnet it drew them. Queen Ozma, Wizard Diggs, the guardsmen, the newly awakened piglet pair, and more fairies than you could shake a stick at moved, descended, followed the thrilling gleam of a lavender light infinitely far away.

A rainbow of purple shades flowed throughout the cavern, lighting everything with a tempestuously living brilliance. It was something ineffable; of that all were persuaded. But what was it whence streamed the violent violet effulgence?

THE CROWN OF OZ

Nobody had a clue.

Could it be the glow of earth-surface light shining through the purple ice? Was it the searchlights of a rescue party making its way toward them? Or was it some other powerful radiance entirely? something so incredible that its like had never before been seen in Oz—or under it?

Yes.

The party, of ice and through ice, moving on and down, came to a new and vast underground cavern hollowed out in the shape of a perfect sphere. Out of it crashed in thrilling rays of unearthly brilliance a lilac light. And in the very center—

But wait! Before they got so far something intervened. Ozma and her supporters espied two figures wavering uncertainly in the orchid emanation.

What wonder was this? From the hand of one of the figures struck magenta gleams that meant that the being was of the divine order.

“Our Sovereign!” screamed 366 fairy voices at once.

What was sorted out of the subsequent confusion of fabulous events and supreme emotions, complicated by the tendency of everyone to forget all about it, was this (the Wizard jotted furiously in his notebook the whole time; otherwise no recounting of the proceedings they all witnessed and forgot would have been possible):

Queen Lurline and the Ugliest Troll told Ozma how they had managed to penetrate to the Cavern of the Crown and see the fantastic jewel suspended in icy space at its heart. They had been enraptured by its magnificence (they thought; by now they couldn’t quite remember). But they had experienced what they had known and forgotten: that the diadem could not even be closely approached by other than the one for whom it was intended. Lurline, majestic Queen of All the Fairies, to say nothing of an insignificant and hideous troll, had not been able to draw near it. Neither could they tear themselves away from its fabulous spell.

Thus had they wavered, suspended between two worlds,

until now, so miraculously, she to whom the Crown belonged had come, all deserving but all unknowing, to claim it. Heaven knew what might have been their fate, they thus enthralled, if she had not!

C H A P T E R F O R T Y - E I G H T

The better to enjoy, they believed, the triumphal return in majesty, the fairies in Princess Ozma's joyful band elected to be of average human size as they crowded into the council chamber of Glinda the Good. The result was a frightful crush. Don't forget that there weren't just the multiple hundreds of fays but also a number of guardsmen, a massive troll, an old wizard, and two pigs to swell the throng.

As was fitting, the Good Sorceress started from her chair of state as soon as she caught sight of Queens Lurline and Ozma and advanced with the intention of welcoming with solemnity her august visitors. Before she was able to do so, however, the in-swarming masses cut her off. Her prior visitors, the caressopigs, underfoot, fared no better. They found themselves buffeted back against the dais. The three boys succeeded in scrambling up on the tea table where they took advantage of the confusion to swallow what remained of Glinda's muffins. Young Twee gave a leap and vaulted onto the cushions of the throne-chair itself. What became of Cleo for the moment is not recorded.

Thus, it was somewhat of an anticlimax when the eighteen fairies, retaining 'normal' fairy size, came winging in slowly, carrying the gorgeous Crown of Love and Wisdom in awful

pomp upon its amethyst velvet robe.

They looked for a place to set it down. But woe! Amid the mob they could not at once distinguish which heads were accustomed to being crowned. It couldn't be that tall lady with the auburn hair. She was already wearing a coronet above her snood. And the crown-bearers had to keep moving! They were unable to hover stock-still in the midst of the lavender air. Or what if they began to move in different directions and the great Crown wobbled and fell off? It would be too shameful.

So, as one, they aimed for the seat semi-royal. They couldn't go far wrong letting it rest on that. They ended setting down the crown on whoever was occupying that chair!

An utter shocked silence struck the hitherto freely chattering throng.

Oh, what an awful gaffe—and example of *lèse majesté*! A crowned pig, and crowned with the most sublime diadem in all of Fairyland. The mistake would never be able to be lived down. It was so terrible that... there was nothing for it but to laugh.

Even so did Queens Ozma and Lurline and the latter cried, "All hail the first pig queen!"

Twee had been at first startled and alarmed to be blanketed in velvet, with something hard and rather heavy resting on her head. She snuffled and snorted and tried to move whatever it was that was preventing her from seeing out. She lifted one handfoot to draw aside the drape, realized she needed two, and stood upright upon her hind legs.

At this the velvet robe fell gracefully about her shoulders, the inclusive verge of golden metal was round her brow, and Queen Twee stepped forth to gaze with majesty upon the multitude gathered to do her homage.

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

All seven of the caresso-pigs ran up the hill path leading from the tower castle of Glinda the Good. In the air above them hovered the ghost of an eighth caresso-pig, drawn from his spectral home far away to be present at the exaltation of his siblings. This had been their day of glory and they must needs rejoice. Now they were hurrying home to share their bliss with Beenie and Suze.

They were almost too excited for talk. However, as they drew near the famous Salt Sea Hot Springs "Her Grace", as she was now, and would always be, called by her sisters, turned to Wee and said, "Wasn't I something special today!"

"Yes, darling," acknowledged Wee gladly. "You are the first pig ever to be crowned Queen in Oz... and I dare say the *only* one."

"At least with the Crown of Love and Wisdom itself," admitted Twee, who supposed that in a land like Oz there might well exist one or even plural pig principalities, with their own forms and ceremonies. "Do you think I made a nice queen?"

"You were perfectly lovely as Queen," assured her sister, who herself enjoyed as much delight as was possible, simply at having been delivered from the fell clutches of the heartless trolls.

"I hope Princess Ozma will not feel the Crown has been sullied by my wearing it," spoke Twee low, "when she now comes to assume it at her own coronation."

Here Wee reached across to squeeze her sister's handfoot. They knew what it meant to belong to an untouchable race.

But now all the males had sprinted ahead to be the first to get to the spring. This was a steaming pond, almost a lake, that bubbled up in a grotto some distance off the highland trail. The boys leapt the fence and scrambled down the path leading to the hollow.

The pool of warm steaming water did look inviting. Mark stuck in a trotter, then took a taste of his extremity.

"Say, the water really does taste salty, like sea water!"

"It *is* sea water," declared the more informed Homer. "At least it comes from a 'sea': the Soup Sea. So old Miss Mombi declared."

"How does it get here?" Mark wanted to know.

"Nilnul could tell you that. He knows there's chains of caverns and great underground cracks extending all the way here from that sea."

"Where are the girls?" somebody broke in.

"You mean 'Queen' Twee and them?" laughed Biff.

"Those are the ones."

"They were just behind me," Mark could relate. "They should be catching up soon." He had lost no time in getting out of his unaccustomed clothes and now he made briskly for the briny waters of the pond. Despite the lavender steam that rose from the surface you could, when close to, see the sandy bottom sparkling clear.

Homer, Biff, Nilnul, and even the ghost of Lazlodes also pulled off their clothes. The grand jackets, trousers, and shirts were flung approximately on huckleberry bushes that flourished around the pool.

"Last one in is a fat sow!" shouted Biff and all five pigs dove into the water at once. There were many oohs and ahhs as the warm steamy water enveloped their bodies. "This is the way we

should always take our baths!" Biff chortled on.

By now Mark had swum to the opposite side of the pond which lay shrouded in the mist. "Say!" he hollered suddenly. "Did you know, there's a waterfall that empties into the pool this side?"

The others swam over to see. Peering up through the fog-steam they could just fail to make out the top of the cataract which rose perhaps thirty feet in the air. But: "*I thought* I heard a sort of rustling, splashing sound," reported Homer, "but I couldn't tell where it was coming from."

The squeals and shouts of the happy swine echoed through the misty air and activated a device that had been set up—by I wonder who!—near the brink of the falls, a device that could only be triggered by the grunts and oinks of hogs. It was a modest-sized grey box placed on a rock and when it 'heard' hog calls its side opened to allow a heap of peony-pink powder to spill out into the rushing water of the stream just beneath it. The powder crystals foamed up immediately into terrific clouds of soapy bubbles with a sweet scent.

The girl pigs, approaching the bathing pool more sedately, were the first to notice the big pinky-purple globes that, lighter than air, were already drifting away from the brink of the falls. The bubbles moved like tiny silent ghostly dirigibles through the fog-dimmed air.

"Hey, boys, look at that," cried the sisters and hurried the last bit of the way down the path to the water's edge.

By now the tide of bubbles had cascaded down the length of the falls and on splashing contact with the warm pool water rose up again in their fluffy thousands. The bathers were enchanted and stopped their splashing and shouting to stare.

"Boys, you had better be careful," called Cleo from the bank. "Those bubbles look mighty big!"

"So what?!" yelled Biff. "What harm can bubbles do us? Anyway they're soap—I can smell—and we forgot to bring soap with us." So saying he reached out and gathered a great leg-load of the floating froth and proceeded to lather himself up with

bubbles.

All the others, males and females alike, got into the act, tumbled and cavorted in the enchanted half-world of bubbles and water, and had the bath of their lives.

As, delightfully tired and ever so clean, the Caressos dried themselves off on their jettisoned garments (velvet's okay as a towel, but not satin), "I wonder," said Mark, "where all the soap suds came from," at the same moment as Cleo pensively enquired, "What could have made the pool get all of those wonderful bubbles?"

As usual Homer hadn't been just goofing off but also thinking. "This was as far as Miss Mombi accompanied us. And remember? she also insisted we come home by way of the Salt Sea Hot Springs—and 'stop' here..."

"That's right. She did!" someone confirmed. "And you further recall she was planning some kind of surprise for us. I wonder if this isn't..."

C H A P T E R F I F T Y

Unlike the Caresso-pigs who (most of them) had felt fresh and chipper for their journey home, Queen Ozma's entourage were exhausted after their day, night, and day underground. The same could not be said for Queen Lurline's bunch, as fairies are inexhaustible. They would probably sit up all night regaling each other with tales of their various adventures.

Ozma was just human enough . to want a good night's sleep herself. It was, therefore, late the next morning before she joined at brunch table the stately sorceress Glinda, who had been up since dawn as usual and busy with her astrolabe and volumes of statistical abstracts. Of course Queen Lurline took part in the intimate gathering and with her was her by now dedicated .friend, the Ugliest Troll. Though the fairy monarch ate nothing she delighted the company by her ready repartee.

"Oh, I thought I'd never see the light again," she cried vivaciously. "U.T. and I plodded on for simply ages, and though there were magnificent sights to be seen the Crown itself, the object of our researches, eluded us until just before dear Ozma here—but you know the rest. The point I wanted to make was that all the light we had was what emanated from me myself. I don't know if you know how enervating it can be to have to see

by one's own reflecting glory."

The others could imagine, and did. Glinda alone was more methodical and took notes. "How long did it actually take you to make your way underground from the Soup Sea grotto to the cellars here?"

"Oh, it seemed days! And was. We had three overnights in the caverns, didn't we, U.T.?"

The Ugliest Troll confirmed the estimate.

"And that was *before* we ran up against Ozma and her bunch."

"What is the amount of candlepower you produce?"

"In the neighborhood of three ohms, I should think. That's at a time, of course. What do you think, Ozma? You're half fairy—if not more."

Ozma answered a little distraite. Her goals were only half achieved, if that—and the lesser half to boot if the rescue of two pigs could be deemed less vital than the pacifying of a whole race of Trolls who were upsetting the vital delivery of precious stones to the capital. There was also a third thing she had a vague memory of oughting to do but what it was just for the moment escaped her.

She looked at the ugliest troll and turned the conversation. "I believe I am not wrong, dear Queen Lurline, in thinking that your object in seeking out U.T. here was to gain, if possible, an ally with inside information for use in the upcoming confrontation with the trolls. Am I right?"

"Quite." Lurline looked at U.T. benevolently. "Ought we not to be about it then? It's been extremely nice being with you, Glinda, but now I feel we must gird up our loins and face the inevitable disagreeable."

The moment of cosiness was over. Ozma and the others went to join Wizard Diggs who had breakfasted with the guardsmen and soon the whole company, taking leave of their hostess, set out along the road of puce bricks in the direction of the main entrance to the mines of the Trolls.

The eighteen bearers of the gleaming Crown of Love and Wisdom flew dutifully along in the rear. The sight of the

majestic diadem, it was thought by the fairy rulers, would do much to awe the trolls into a mood for obedience.

But a surprise awaited the company when in due course, after a detour to re-collect the fleet of bicycles, it reached the lookout tower of the trolls. The circulating pickets were for the time not to be seen and the only visible representatives of the nation the queens had come to subdue seemed to be two individuals in the tower who leaned out and thumbed their noses at the august delegation of fairy royalty. Then they stuck out their tongues, popped their eyes, snapped such fingers as they had, and made loud gagging sounds.

Ozma looked at Lurline askance and both fairies did the same to the Wizard. "What do you make of that, Your Grace?" asked Diggs.

"I scarcely know," vouchsafed Ozma, "—although it does remind me of something."

"Never mind," said Lurline no-nonsensically, and she called out to the sentinels, "You fellows up there! Come down and take us to your leaders."

The two trolls seemed curiously ready to comply. They fairly tumbled over each other climbing down the ladder. When they reached the ground the replacements for Frumple and Ankle pretended to limp and also made lewd gestures with various parts of their bodies. Without saying anything they hobbled to the big double gates opening into the mineworks proper and one of them manipulated a large amethystine key at his waist. The gates swung open.

Some hundreds of yards on, in the steeply ascending slope of the mountain gaped a black hole. The trolls made for it unerringly and Lurline turned to the Ugliest Troll. "Oh-oh, that looks familiar. Rather too familiar."

U.T., back on home grounds, extended a flipper reassuringly.

"I'm counting on you to do your stuff now," pursued the fairy queen. "Soften up your countrymen and try to make them see reason."

"I warrant you, my liege," said the bookish Troll. Down in

the mine passage it was at first gloomy until eyes accustomed to the soft amethyst lighting. The group of Oz leaders strode along in the wake of the troll guard, the crown-bearing fairies flying interference. Some hundreds of yards on they came to the works office.

The queens peeped in, while the guardstrolls cleared their throats, whistled, and picked their noses. Within the room a number of important-looking executive-type trolls sat at desks, absorbedly wagging their fingers in their ears and clacking their teeth.

"Er—pardon me," spoke royal Ozma. "We are Rulers of Fairyland and Oz, respectively. We wish to have conference with the leader of the Troll nation."

"I am the leader of the Trolls," stated a vast individual with very large ears and no brainpan.

(This was the celebrated Garble.) "What's the story?"

"Oh. Well, we are come to arrange for the full resumption of jewel shipments to the Amethyst City—and no more agitation."

"A camel train loaded with gems went off to A-town this morning," informed Garble. "That is, Old Amethyst City. Is that where you meant?"

"Hardly," replied Ozma. "I referred to my capital down in Gillikinland South, you know. It was formerly called after some other, inferior gem."

"Oh! Well, they're loading an extra-large shipment for that very destination at this moment. Wanna look?"

The troll chief seemed curiously unmoved by the majesty of the visiting royalty, nor did he bat an eye as he spotted the glowing Crown of Love and Wisdom being borne back and forth through the air out in the gallery way. He just motioned the company to follow after him.

A half-mile hike along branching mine passages brought the party to a railed-off ledge from which there was a marvelous view down across a vast violet-lit cavern, at all sides of which a host of troll laborers hacked with picks at the cavern walls. As faceted amethysts rattled down in cascades from the mining

faces they cast a million purple sparkles of reflected light. The viewers were nearly dazed by the brilliance.

"This is extremely gratifying," declared Princess Ozma at last. "We are indeed pleased to see that the recent—er, dispute has blown over. May we enquire how the—um, change of policy was arrived at?"

"You mean why we Trolls decided to straighten up and fly right? Knock off striking and get back to work?"

"Yes, something like that," answered the girl ruler, who would not herself have expressed it in just those terms.

"It was those envoys from the kid queen down in Emerald City—oh, sorry; that'd be you, wouldn't it?" Garble puffed out his cheeks and growled acknowledgingly.

"And the Emerald City's the Amethyst City now," he went on. "Yeah, well, those envoys are a couple of mellow little fellows. Right away our lot couldn't help admiring them. What winning ways: What delightful gestures! What charm! Their thousand captivating quirks of face and jerks of limbs have become all the rage here in Trolldom by now."

Here Garble yawned, sneezed, and belched extravagantly.

"Our former fill-in occupations of sitting on our hands—or fins or flippers—and hanging our heads or, in a few cases, plodding around in picket lines began to seem duller than the dullest. Suddenly all the popularity went out of them.. Instead, picking the teeth, snapping the fingers, and softshoe numbers became the great fad. The guys couldn't wait to get back to the mine faces when the envoys set the example."

Ozma was frankly puzzled. "Envoys"? She didn't remember—Great fays! he meant those two dimwits Lapstart and Draxton, whom she had dispatched offhand to get lost, if possible, in troll country. *They* couldn't have—! But she recalled with a gasp what the strange tics and fidgets of the trolls had reminded her of.

"There they are now," hummed Garble. "We appointed them gang bosses—so the workers, when they flagged, could look to them for inspiration." He pointed—and moved his feet in a

slowed-down version of a Highland reel.

The queens, wizard, and, as it proved, perfectly supernumerary Ugliest Troll peered, and at last they saw them: on a raised platform far below on the cavern floor. The two tiny figures in traditional uniforms of Guardsmen of the Palace of Magic hollered encouragingly through megaphones, in between fits of coughing, giggling enchantingly, and delivering Bronx cheers.

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

Ruler Fattywiggins had quitted the Throne at last, and forever, and taken her place on the palace balcony to witness the bicycle-borne arrival back at her capital and capitol of Ozma, hereditary regent of all the Ozzes (branch offices in Burzee and Mo). At her sides stood temporary Prime Minister Xavier Jaxon and Serena the Sweetly Singing Seamstress and a number of others of the court dignitaries, while down in the cellars the Herr Kapellmeister peeled potatoes.

"There she is how!" screamed genteelly songstress Serena in a clear high A-flat. Afterwards though she didn't know whether to turn to Xavier on her left or Langley on her right for confirmation.

Ozma pedaled elegantly, right up to the wrought-bronze gates in the palace-grounds fence. There she jumped down and presented her credentials to General Omby Amby Battles standing at stiff attention. As everyone expected, he let her in, followed by hundreds of fairies of various sizes, a number of guardsmen, trolls, etc. No one had attention to spare to count them. All eyes were glued on the Crown of Love and Wisdom which floated on high, borne on its royal purple robe and casting off continuously rich gleams of purple brilliance.

The procession passed within the Palace and soon in the great Throne Room and Presence Chamber there were touching scenes of reunion.

"And how have you fared then, my dear Fattywiggins, as Acting Queen of Oz?" enquired Ozma indulgently when the first greetings had been exchanged.

"Oh, fair to middling, Your Grace," simpered Fattywiggins, bulging devoutly. "I—uh, got rid of that awful kapellmeister *as* kapellmeister. I arranged to dispose of one of the magic eggs that strange woman left with you. And I've started on Bergson's *The Elan Vital Comes Back*. Other than that not too much has been happening. As you see, everything's *completely* purple by now."

"That's as it should be," the true Girl Ruler surprised her favorite by saying. "As for those eggs, I suppose we'll never know what they were supposed to be used for. They would seem to be completely *de trop*. Shall we have them made into egg flips? What do you think, Fatty?"

Fattywiggins was not able wholeheartedly to endorse her royal chum's suggestion. Instead she tried to mask her disconcertion by enquiring enthusiastically after the success of fairy Ozma's quest.

"All missions accomplished," exclaimed the dainty queen with satisfaction. "Your caresso-pigs were found and restored to the bosom of their family. You'll see them at the Birthday Ball! There's still time for all the festivities to go forward as planned. Now, of course, the star turn of the holidays is to be my coronation." Ozma giggled girlishly and glanced aslant at the diadem.

Along with all the rest Fattyw had noticed the majestic Crown of Love and Wisdom, which the bearer fairies at last, with much relief, had delivered to the royal heart-place of Oz. Now it depended magnificently from one of the knobs on top of the throne chair. The tubby favorite glowed at the thought of her friend's coming glamorment.

Still she was curious about the essential success of Ozma's mission. "And the trolls? Have they been pacified?"

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"Oh, yes, I'm happy to say. I had a long and intimate conference with the leader of the Troll nation and got to the bottom of that whole affair. Just as I suspected, it was our friends the Nomes who had incited the trolls to go on strike. It's rather an odd story..."

Fatty was much puzzled to hear such a phrase as "our friends, the Nomes" drop from the lips of the Ruler of Oz but this did not prevent her arranging her folds on the top step of the dais and getting ready to hear a tale.

"The train of events goes back many months to a time when the Nomes were attempting, as so often, to tunnel under the desert to get to Oz where they would try for another takeover bid." So did Queen Ozma begin her recital, taking her ease on the seat royal.

"This time they did not proceed under Winkieland, where their former tunnel had been effectively plugged." Ozma had done this herself and knew. "Instead they bored through farther east, under the land of the Gillikins.

"Here they encountered something unique to that country. This was the deep-buried sources of the characteristic Gillikin liquid-air pools.

"The Nomes were mystified, then fascinated. In all their centuries of mining experience they had never run across anything like wells of richly flowing wet dryness. Naturally they tried to divert the flow of the springs - or, if they couldn't manage that, at least to destroy them.

"They introduced high explosives into all such subterranean airways as they came upon. The resultant detonations, it seems, activated a phenomenon which would, to say truth, have occurred anyway in a few hundred years, if not earlier, though by no stretch of the imagination quite this soon after the latest burgeoning of the Old Winkies."

Here Ozma took time to describe the periodic eonian cycles of the typical Oz phenomena of Munchkin flooding, Quadling volcanic activity, Winkie soil shifting, and the present Gillikin air upheaval.

"The result was the present, and so pleasant, resurgence of the Purpleys, with the all-over-sweeping Purplitude they have brought in their train."

Fattywiggins marveled at the complacency with which the formerly so esmeraldic girl ruler spoke of the current amethystism. But the fat favorite had heard enough of the characteristics of empurplement to know that that was how it took you: once infected you went all purple—and loved it! Nor did you have any thought of wanting to revert to any former, inferior color. Fattyw looked around. Everyone in the hall was shades of violet ranging from pale lilac to plum. Only she herself remained true green. She could not herself account for it, but rejoiced in cleaving to the old faith and the one true moss(-color).

"With the liquid air sources under their thumb," the fairy princess was going on, "the Nomes, making use of the cavern chains that everywhere honeycombed the underearth strata of Gillikinland, had soon occupied the whole country, though remaining, themselves, always out of sight below ground."

"They early made contact with their remote cousins, the Trolls, whose mining activities were concentrated in the center of the Gillikin country. These they at once subjugated, organized in unions, and instigated to go on strike against us. In fact, the troll nation, grateful for asylum in Oz, had no great desire to cause us trouble, but they had no choice. Down went their picks and out they came in picket lines."

"Appearances to the contrary, their hearts were not in it. The Trolls are industrious. We must grant them that. They hated sitting around idly and merely making mischief. They wanted to get back to work. Having no use themselves for all the jewels they mined they were not even averse to resuming export shipments, just to get rid of the surplus."

"When the two quirky guardsmen appeared they had an easy job of it persuading the trolls to go back to the status quo ante—"

Here Fattywiggins ventured to break in. "But of course the Nomes would stand for nothing of that sort...?"

"Well, as a matter of fact the attention of the Nomes had been directed on elsewhere. They were only waiting for the completion of the empurplement of the formerly so-called Emerald City to extend their hegemony here as well. And I am right, am I not, Wizard—" Here Ozma addressed a remark to her right-hand man, O.Z. Diggs, who lounged at her right hand. "Didn't Glinda say that half Quadlinga as well is now purple?"

"The Book of Records so indicated," affirmed the Wizard. "I had a good browse in the Book that evening at the Sorceress' tower. By now the Purplitude may extend on fully to the southern desert boundary."

Fattyw was aghast. Here were all that were holy in Oz, at least to her, blandly talking of the delivery of the entire fairyland to purplitude, which meant, in practice, the overlordship of the Nomes. Was nobody going to do anything to stop it?

She sat there at Ozma's feet, all in a quandary, as the royal fairy spoke on. Why, wondered Fattywiggins, did she herself care? Why was she too not infected with violent violetness? She was very glad she was not but just the same the oddness of it preoccupied her mightily. She missed some of what her sovereign was saying as she concentrated on the problem.

Then it came to her, as in a dream. The girl remembered something she had never understood; nay, more—had been infuriated by. That peculiar gift of purple chocolates sent by Fairy Queen Lurline (before she herself went completely purple); chocolates with tooth-breaking emerald centers. It had been so nonsensical, even malicious-seeming, and yet it appeared that the Queen of the Fairies had expected her present to be received with satisfaction.

What could be satisfying about swallowing emeralds (as she, Fattywiggins, had ended up doing)? Unless—could it be? Was it thinkable that the emeralds, absorbed by the system, had some kind of prophylactic value rendering the ingester proof against turning some other color than green? That would explain much.

"—shall we sojourn till our coronation," Ozma was saying, as Fattywiggins tuned back in. It must have been something

endearing the (always) young Princess had said, for the assembled throng in the throne room huzzahed and there was a rattle of applause.

But Fattywiggins too was devoted to the little ruler, so devoted that she could not sit here and listen blandly to Ozma's detailing of her plans for the reception of the Nome King and his entourage, upon whose arrival only the Queen was waiting to stage the magnificent rite of the encrownment.

Fatty boggled. The dread Nome King *here*? What horror was this! Oh, Lordy, Ozma really *had* lost her mind. She strained to catch more. "Last night, I hear, they lay at Stratty Stoneford. Tomorrow or next day they will be here."

Cheers of delight rang out and Fattywiggins thought furiously. That near?! And nobody going to do a thing about it but applaud witlessly? Nomes in the Amethyst—that is Emerald—City?! Unthinkable! Well, one person was going to do something about it, or know the reason why.

In the general chatter and hubbub Fattywiggins slipped unnoticed from the presence chamber.

"All safely packed?"

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

"Yes. Have a look." Xavier Jaxon lifted the lid of the capacious wicker basket and Fattywiggins peered in with satisfaction.

"Okay. Let's make tracks," urged the tubby pre-teen. "You're sure you want to do this, Xave? I mean, you're as mauve as the rest of them. Maybe you don't even care to see the District of Oz green again?"

"Anything you say, Fats. We're old comrades in arms. I don't care one way or the other. I can take enchantments—or coronations—or leave them alone. It's my work here in the laboratory that interests me."

"And most interesting it is," chimed in the learned Ugliest Troll. "Thanks so much, Mr. Jaxon, for letting me look in on your projects. My pal, the little fish, is going to love hearing about them. That device for throwing the images of a sleeper's dreams upon a screen is extremely ingenious. I want to see more of it in action. I have quite spectacular dreams myself."

"Right heartily," promised X.J. "—all in good time. For now, do you bicycle?"

"Why... I hardly know," hesitated the troll. "Until Miss Fattywiggins here introduced uni-, bi-, tri-, and quatricycles,

biking was unknown in the land — nor did we Trolls do much of it, home in Scandinavia.”

“But you have a good sense of balance?”

“Oh, yes, that.”

Fattywiggins led the way on tiptoe and Jaxon and the troll, bearing the big square basket between them, followed down the service stairway.

Distantly they could hear the crowd still applauding in the throne room. Silently they sped down the wooden ramp to the bicycle stalls.

Fattywiggins, the expert cyclist, and Xavier Jaxon, also no slouch, quite frankly had to hold up U.T.’s bike between them, each extending a steadying strong hand to his handlebars as they teetered around the courtyard until the troll got the hang of it.

One thing about cycling; once you know how you know how absolutely, and the faster — not the slower! — you pedal the safer you are. With speed the wheelborne trio sailed down the formal approachway to the mulberry-bronze palace gates, where General Omby Amby wonderingly let them through.

When the bikers had settled down to a steady unfaltering pace over the smooth new-paved country road Fattywiggins had time to talk to herself, though for the benefit of the others too. “Tomorrow — or next day,” she muttered. “They seem to be taking their time. Of course they’re on foot, and that Nome king in a palanquin or sedan chair, no doubt... ‘Stratty Stoneford’?”

Fatty had taken a moment to look at a map hung up on the wall of Xavier’s laboratory. “That looked to be about twenty miles away... I don’t suppose they started very early. Say fifteen miles at the closest. At this rate we would be that far in, say, three hours — maybe a bit more.” She spoke louder to share even more explicitly with her companions the fruit of her cogitations.

Fattywiggins hardly noticed the scenery. At first as they rattled over the cobbles in the city itself she had been a little extra preoccupied that the inexperienced troll would fall off. Not only bicycling but the purple glories of the ex-Emerald City

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were all so new to him and he frankly neglected his steering to gaze around. Still, they made the Gillikin Gate all right and after that it was plain sailing.

Up hill and down dale they flew. Nobody said much. When anybody did speak to Fattywiggins she was abstracted. Gosh! Everything depended on her, she fondly told herself, and trod on the pedals with renewed determination.

Suddenly something caught her eye, something that brought home to her the oppressiveness of the all-purple landscape. The thing was a blade of grass. Green grass. Fattyw slammed on the brakes.

"Wait!" she cried to her co-cyclists when impetus was hurling them on past. Dutifully Jaxon and the Ugliest Troll applied their brakes. Fatty stood her bicycle and ran back to the side of the road.

Yes, one long strand of green grass, almost a weed, amid the thousands of (an admittedly delicious) orchid hue.

How did it get there? What did it mean?

Fatty nipped off the blade at its root and twined it in a neat circlet about her finger. It would be a talisman to her as she went to face the foe.

Now as the trio whirled further across the purple miles the girl meditated upon her own greenness.

Of course Fattywiggins wasn't really green. She naturally wore an emerald frock (it only stayed green as long as she had it on) and her hair since coming to the (once—and future?) Emerald City had taken on an Irish tint, but the rest of her retained all normal tints. When Fattyw said she was green she merely meant she hadn't gone wholly violet like everyone else.

The team whizzed across a low bridge over a creek. As they did so a green fish leapt from the wistaria waters and cried "Onward!" before flopping back into its element.

Again Fattywiggins jumped from her bike. She leaned down at bridge-edge and called, "*What* did you say?"

The green fish, looking most eye-catching against its all-violet background, had time to chat. "We're the last, you and I,"

it judged. "You seem to be the last green girl, and I'm the only green fish left in all this river system, as far as I've been able to determine. We ought to hold the standard high. Onward!"

"Well, thank you," acknowledged Fattywiggins. "That gives me courage to face the foe."

In an ordinary fairy story Fattywiggins would have to run across three things to give her courage to face the foe. But this isn't an ordinary tale. It's extraordinary—or perhaps subordinate. Fattywiggins must do her foe-facing now with just two extra impulses, but they were enough. She never found out that the green leaf of grass and the emerald fish were merely exceptions that tested a rule. She had her courage and she pressed on.

The Ugliest Troll sighted them first; under the trees that crested a long ridge ahead. The Nomes were having a picnic meal before continuing their stately progress to the capital of their new province.

Up the ascending road rushed the three comrades. They had been on the way the expected number of hours and could feel the strain. But despair—and courage—drove them on. They sprang from their bicycles nearly as one and ran forward to the spread plaid with royal monogram on which sat the King of the Nomes with a caviar canapé arrested on its way to his mouth.

What have we here?" growled the Nome King. "An advance welcoming party?"

"Hardly that," riposted Fattywiggins pertly. "We are come to tell you you must go back."

"Back?!" echoed the king and started to his feet, dropping the canapé. All his attendant (g)nomes looked taken aback as well. "I don't think I heard you right."

"You will not go forward but will return where you came from," Fattywiggins informed the Nomes.

The King stepped forward but the ugly troll placed himself foursquare before him and barked "Halt!"

"We're on our way to our new home in the Amethyst City," protested the head Nome.

"For 'Amethyst' read 'Emerald'," retorted Fattywiggins. "The

king of Jewels.”

“Purple emeralds yet?” said the Nome as if he had a card up his sleeve.

“Purple shmurple,” said Fatty to gain time, while Xavier Jaxon cut in with “You won’t go further.”

“Who’ll stop us?!” yelled the king, at last roused and in violent dudgeon. “Not you three utterly insignificant creepy-crawly idiotic stupid ignorant uninformed badly educated moronic fat ungainly hideous poorly dressed cretins with bad breath! I *don’t* think —”

These words made Fattywiggins and her friends see green and the girl leader remembered the courage she had gathered to face the foe. “Yes, us!” she snarled and stuck out her tongue very provokingly.

The Ugliest Troll also said, “Yes, we will,” nor did Xavier J. look like giving ground.

“How do you expect to do that?” the Nomes in chorus wanted to know.

“With *these*,” cried the three friends and had sudden recourse to the egg basket on the back of Xavier’s bike. Each seized an egg and brandished it.

It was an old ploy, used time and time again, in Oz and out of it[§], to drive away unwanted (g)nomes but it never failed to work. The Nomes as one went a ghastly sidewalk color.

The Nome King was the first to regain partial poise. He gave a sickly laugh and said, “You win that round. It’s true we Nomes are scared to death of eggs. However, if you’ll check back you’ll see that hens’ eggs, when propelled against us, have no more harmful effect, in fact, than to make us hop about in transports of rage.^{§§} I’m afraid you’ll have to come up with something more lethal than that.”

Fattyw and her friends were disappointed. They had hoped for a whole lot more from their arsenal of eggs.

Now, in despair, they each picked out a Nome face for a

§ See, among others, *The Vegetable Man of Oz*.

§§ See *Ozma of Oz*, pp. 221-2. Editor’s notes.

target and hurled a purple egg at it.

Snap! Crackle! Pop! With loud reports the three sighted Nomes vanished, leaving nothing to be seen but the egg on their faces and that soon dropped to the ground.

“Hurrah! Hurrah!” shouted the joyful vigilante army, while the Nomes turned tail and fled, not even taking their picnic provisions with them. Up into the woods they sped with howls of horror, and swift the invincible three pursued them, an egg in each hand.

Fast they flew through the forest and ever and anon when a Nome would stand and try to show fight a person or a troll would throw an egg and destroy him utterly, whereupon his surviving fellows would bellow in renewed terror and race further.

That was all very well but before long there was only one egg left, and the Nomes knew it!

By now the fleeing goblin rabble and their pursuers had come out on open high ground beyond the woods. A clutch of the grey creatures were seen to run together in a hasty parley. Then one of their number turned, a solitary hero, to face his enemies.

None of the three friends was a dumbie. They all knew what the brave Nome intended. He was a volunteer to give his life for the common good, to draw off the one remaining egg. Then the freedom fighters from the Emerald City would be ammunitionless and at the mercy, after all, of the insurgent Nomes.

It was the moment of truth, and Fattywiggins was aware of it.

Then, just as all was lost, all was won.

There was a terrific yellow SPLATTT! in front of the hero Nome that stopped him in his tracks.

Our friends looked up to see a fleet of purple swan chariots zooming over and zeroing in. Those with good eyesight could even see, peering intently over the chariot sides, the faces of many intelligent pigs, plus those of a couple witches, good and bad.

C H A P T E R F I F T Y - T H R E E

There was a lot of explaining to be done. Glinda did it.

"After Your Highness left my castle tower," she said to Queen Ozma who sat on the Chair of State in the Palace of Magic, "I'll freely confess I felt a bit lonely and out of things. I turned for solace as so often to the big Record Book and followed with minute attention all that you enacted during your progress home. All seemed going forward splendidly for your reception of the Nome cohorts and their attendance at your coronation as Governess of the Nome province of Gillikinland South.

"There was only one fly in the ointment. A certain Miss Fattywiggins was not getting ready for the fête but instead was reported as proceeding with a couple of her cronies to some sandboxes whence they withdrew eleven big purple eggs. These I recognized at once from the printed description as a specialty of the widely suspected sorceress Mombi and you can be sure it piqued my curiosity to know what the girl would attempt with those. Had the beloved Princess of Oz nourished a snake at her bosom? Was Fattywiggins, consorting with the ill-reputed Mombi, going to turn on her sovereign and do her a mischief?

"I turned from the entries in the Book of Records and brought into use my example of Wizard Diggs' spectroscreen and now I

could both see and hear what the three conspirators were doing. Far from plotting evil it soon transpired from their talk that they had some quixotic plan in mind of saving Ozma and all Oz from a fate they were not even fearing.

"I began to grow sympathetic and followed with interest as the group boarded bicycles. Dames of Blocksburg! It looked as if they were going to go try to turn back the entire army of the Nomes with less than a dozen eggs!

"To even out the odds a bit I let harness the swan fleet and flew away promptly, still monitoring on the spectroscreen. First stop was indicated to be Witch Mombi's hut, where I needed to stock up on the prepotent purple eggs. As it turned out, I interrupted a social call. The charming Caresso-pigs were with the sorceress, apparently having called to thank her for some treat they'd recently enjoyed.

"When the group heard of the jeopardy of Miss Fattywiggins the pigs clamored to be allowed to go to her relief, while Mombi willingly gave free access to her fowl runs. It took no more than half an hour to full up the chariots and then we were off. The rest you know. No more than an additional dozen of the bombs were dropped before the Nome horde surrendered, signed a cease-fire, and scuttled back underground and out of Oz."

Ozma wiped her brow. "Truly, it was a narrow escape. And to think we were all awaiting the ultimate horror with utmost equanimity."

"Well, you know how Purplitude works—by now."

"Dare we hope the purple plague is over?" the Oz ruler needed to know.

"Oh, I think so. With the Nomes no longer stirring up things with their explosives, the Purpleys will subside again. You'll have a few hundred years, if not eons, before they'll ever make another move.

"And the purpleness will fade?"

"Just like a bad bruise. It will pale to dull blue, then a sickly yellow, until at last Emerald City faces will reappear a healthy normal pink—or green. But it will take a while."

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“‘Til then?”

“I see no reason why Your Majesty should not proceed with your Birthday celebrations. After all, today *is* the twenty-first.”

“Oh! But my coronation; it was rather of that I was thinking.”

“I believe I see dear Queen Lurline laying out the Circle and Pentacle on the marble floor at this very moment!”

“Oh, good gracious! So soon! We have not even completed our royal plans. So many friends to thank! and to invite to the ceremony, if they are not present already...”

Ozma referred hastily to a list she had made up. No one in all the tangled tale who had contributed to (even while hindering) her well-being or that of Oz was forgotten, even down to the poor old Kapellmeister, who was raised from the cellar to wield the baton during the performance of the Fairy Fanfare and Fugue which would lead up to the august moment.

But the most important question of all remained unresolved. *Who* should hold high the diadem before placing its the Crown of Love and Wisdom, upon the honey-hued head of Her Radiance, Ozma of Oz?

But was there a question after all?

Who should it be but the irrepressible uncorruptable irritating lovable savioress of Oz, Miss Fattywiggins? And the Caresso-Pigs would hold the royal train.

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