

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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shoved into the next-back-most rank.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## BEENIE IN OZ

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

yourself down that way and go for help.”

“No, but we’ll park ourselves at the window and just stay there ‘til help comes along.”

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

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

“What’s the matter, boy?” yelled the captain.

“We need a bit of rescue! Malchor’s locked us in Beenie’s room.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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late developments.

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

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

No, indeed. They mustn’t.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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you're back to square one."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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“Who’s there?” called the Scarecrow.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Just look around you at the world today.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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he silently recited a particular incantation.

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

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

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

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

And the Doubtful Dromedary was outside.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Silence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“What about up?” queried Siko Pompus.

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

it ride?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

They started out.

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

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

But let us go back.

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

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

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

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

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

The dromedary looked doubtful.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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ing in the mud flats.”

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

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

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

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

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

“There ought to be a rainbow somewhere

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

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

Clouds are flying, sunshine sparkles,

Rain descends in just one spot,

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

There ought to be a happy ending.

There ought to be a dream come true.

But the only happy ending is

Is for you:

You’re leaving with your lover, laughing.

Rain falls while the sun shines hot.

That ought to make a rainbow somewhere...

It does not.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

You know? they did.

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

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

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

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

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

The fat old fellow purred and his eyes twinkled.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"But then, whatever do you mean?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Pompus strolled leisurely forward.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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Emerald City—if not kidnapping it whole.”

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

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

Secretly everyone breathed a sign of relief.

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

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

"I'd know you anywhere.

I'd know that grin.

I'd know you anywhere

When you walked in—

"You're the celebrated Leprechaun Siko Pompus."

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

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

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

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

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

"Be silent: I shall inform you—"

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

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

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

“I’ve heard of him!” exclaimed Siko.

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

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

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

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

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

“Are you pleased?” asked Malchor.

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

“I brought it.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"And which tune was that?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Whu—where?” stuttered Siko all surprised.

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

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

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

"You'll be wanting to take your own departure," spoke King Pon. It wasn't a question, or a hint; just a statement.

"That's right, your grace," replied the Scarecrow, who had slipped into his natural role as leader of the combined 'rump' caravan party and erstwhile rainbow travelers. "We must be getting on. Thank goodness, there's no great urgency about our travel. We can take our time and enjoy it. But we do want to get together with the great ones in the Emerald City and see about getting young Mose disenchanting."

Mose was of course in the careful charge of Beenie Amerul. For a little while the girl had her own 'living doll', grotesque as the form of the poppet was, and she meant to discharge her custodianship creditably. She herself, naturally, had shed, albeit with many a sigh and secret tear, her mockery costume of "the second Scarecrow" and now appeared as a simple Quadling maiden.

As for the continuously live and kickin' Flanders Scarecrow, he/it hung on a coathanger (royal, velvet, and monogrammed) and was an honored and full-fledged member of the company. Many a fascinating conversation would the 'true' Scarecrow have with his other self in the days to come.

Polychrome would stay with the party only until they encountered their first rainbow. She had no fish to fry in the capital and felt she ought to be attending to her rainbovial duties for a time now after a month or more of being so often from home.

Traveling by easy stages the strollers had just come in sight of the town of Fuddlecumjig when a cloud of dust was seen, a

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clatter and bang of hoofs and wheels were heard, and the celebrated Red Wagon, Sawhorse-impelled, with Jack Pumpkinhead at the reins, ran up to a smart halt amid a spray of gravel.

“Her Highness wanted you to enter the city in style,” announced the genial pumpkin-headed fellow. “She’s been observing you for a long time in the Picture. Very relieved, of course, at the way things turned out for you. However, there are aspects of the situation that still require clarification—” Obviously this was not the amiable larrikin’s own vocabulary but rather something that Queen Ozma—or someone had trained him to say.

The party needed no wordy explanations. Looking forward to give their feet a break, six and a half of them climbed aboard. That would be Dorothy, Tik-Tok, Captain Salt, the Scarecrow and his other self, Sabrina, and Mose. Djebbel the dromedary elected to continue after all on foot. As for the parrot Papuga: in the end and in view of already perceived changes in the personality and hopably the behavior of his master, he had opted to remain as an appendage to the new-formed “beautiful friendship” of the island savant. At this moment he would in all likelihood be squawking and/or fluttering somewhere south of Mount Munch.

What a thrill for Sabrina A. (now considerably restored in spirits by the pleasant and so unexpected turn affairs had taken to climb into a seat in the veritable fabulous *red wagon*! Twiggy Mose was less thoroughly thrilled, having read only one Oz book (*Pirates*; that and *Captain Salt in Oz* had naturally formed part of the old mariner’s tiny library aboard the *Crescent Moon*), but he didn’t *mind*. To the others it was old stuff but certainly highly gratifying for all that.

The captain was allowed to take the reins. Though seldom ashore he was nevertheless an able hand with a four-in-hand when occasion required. This freed Jack P. to turn to the group and clue them in on developments at the Palace of Magic.

“As I said, Princess Ozma has been looking in on you every day for quite some time. Also I hear she’s been having heavy

## BEENIE IN OZ

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conferences with the Wizard—" Here it was understood by all that the worthy O.Z. Diggs, the original Wonderful Wizard of Oz, was intended (not some inept adept from the isle of Estic). "I don't know what it's about. Ozma's been looking rather solemn though."

This sounded like a mystery: something to give an extra edge of excitement, even anxiety, to the prospect of soon encountering the habitués of the royal court of Oz.



“Steady there, girls,” cautioned Princess Ozma. Betsy, Trot, and Scraps the Patchwork Girl had tagged along as the girl ruler made her daily call in the Wizard’s laboratory. Betsy *still* couldn’t get that catchy tune from the Fairy Dance Recital out of her mind—and it had been weeks now. She’d caught Trot round the waist and was pirouetting her about the big but cluttered work room. Scraps, who would dance at the drop—or, for that matter, on the head—of a pin, was executing a stately gavotte of her own. They all simmered down at their chum’s hint.

“How goes it, Oz?” spoke the little half-fairy. “Nearly ready?”

The old savant was oblivious to any light fantastics going on around him. Scraps, if she’d given a thought to it, might have been reminded of the conjurer Dr. Pipt stirring pots with all four extremities, the way O.Z. Diggs watched over crucibles and tended test tubes, while a most formidable and many-colored reek ascended to the ceiling from a dozen sources.

“Pyew,” said Betsy. “What *is* that?” The girls hadn’t been allowed into the laboratory before, but now that, as Ozma knew, the experiments were so far forward...

“It’s not the most flower-like, is it?” agreed the technician. “I myself find it strange that nature should make *all* of these minerals so necessary for animal well-being so uniformly bad-smelling—and—tasting.” He paused a moment. “Want to sample?”

The girls approached the specimens table with wrinkled noses. They didn’t look at all certain they wanted to sample. Oz had already said it tasted bad so what was the percentage? However, plucky Betsy essayed to sacrifice herself in the name of science. The Wizard handed her a wooden spoon with a dab of cooled mixture on the end of it.

“Faw!” gagged Betsy and spat it out. ““What ever *is* that?” she reiterated.

“Pretty terrible, isn’t it?” agreed Diggs complacently. “And yet it’s absolutely marvelous for you. If you’d swallowed it you would have got into you all the potassium, ascorbic acid, cal-

cium, selenium, iron, magnesium, and vitamin E you need for a whole day. I call it ‘pacsime’: an acronym, you know.”

“But, Professor,” Trot called him honorifically, “if it tastes so bad how could it be good for one?”

“I’m afraid taste is a very poor guide, at least for humans, as to what one ought to ingest. Depending on mere taste, many children—adults too—might live on a steady diet of chocolate bars. Or the grown-ups might choose coffee or liquor or tobacco. And all the while poor-tasting, or no-tasting, potassium, vitamin E, and the rest could be doing wonders for us. It’s strange.”

“What about—” Here the Patchwork Girl turned a somer-  
“Salt!?”

“Dreadful!” exclaimed the Wizard. “But I’m glad you brought it up. In fact, it’s what this whole exercise is about. Our dear Princess here became aware, through her daily attention to the Magic Picture, that an unnatural... ‘enrichment’, shall we say? of the popular diet by salt was taking place in a certain part of Oz. At first she was concerned that an actual display of force was going to be necessary to put a stop to the practice, but fortunately that threat seems to have blown over. Still, someone’s going to have to go round in the wake of the abuse and mop up, as it were. My present decoction, dried in the form of tablets, is supposed to do the trick.”

“Is salt so bad for you?” asked Trot. “I’m so fond of potato chips and popcorn—”

“Not to mention *my* favorites,” put in Betsy, and proceeded to recite a whole litany: “Dill pickles, salted nuts, anchovies, bacon, sardines, pretzels, smoked mackerel, fried ham, sauerkraut, licorice, saltines, and strong cheeses.”

Ozma shuddered delicately. “I know,” she sighed. “I’ve been trying these last weeks to lead you away from the fell substance by instructing chef Etam Upp to include plenty of herbs and spices in our meals but *no* salt.”

“Gosh,” marveled Betsy. “That super chilé con carne we had last night. You mean there was no salt in that?”

“Nary a smidgin,” replied Ozma colloquially. “And there you

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see you've answered your own possible objection. It isn't by any means necessary to include salt in order for a dish to be flavorful and delicious."

"But, Ozma," pursued Trot. "Why *is* salt so bad? Here in Oz at least, we can't be killed by, or die as a result of, anything, so how could salt harm us?"

"That's quite right, Trot: we can't die. But there's nothing stopping us from having symptoms. Do you ever have a headache?"

"You know I do!" replied the California girl with spirit. "How often I've come to you for an aspirin."

"Actually aspirin's quite good for one," Ozma put in as a footnote, "—in extreme moderation. But people who never take salt never get headaches. Never."

Everybody marveled.

"And then dizzy spells, swollen ankles, sensitive teeth, ringing in the ears, stomach aches, palpitations, or face-flushing. Anyone for those?"

"Why, we all have all of them—regularly," declared Betsy almost indignantly. "What's to stop us?"

"Saltlessness."

### c h a p t e r            t h i r t y - t w o

When the gaggle of girls got downstairs again they had a surprise waiting for them. Ozma had not checked the Magic Picture since breakfast nor realized what good time the truants from southeast Quadlinga were making. There they all were, in the State Reception Room, and Jellia Jamb making them comfortable, when the group from the Wizard's laboratory walked in.

Thus casual was the achievement of Sabrina Amerul's goal of goals: to be presented at the Court of Oz. Queen Ozma was so kind and so condescending. She went round giving each one her hand: in the case of Princess Dorothy, an actual hug, and, out the window, to the forefoot of the Doubtful Dromedary, who said "Hmfff", much gratified. When she came to the trembling Beenie she said, "So this is the little lady who caused this great—well, not 'war' exactly—" Here she broke off quoting Abraham Lincoln. "Say rather 'commotion'. I'm very pleased it all seems to have resolved itself all right—or nearly so."

Breenie just bumbled something incoherent while the little queen's attention passed to the curious acorn-headed stick figure in the little girl's embrace. "And if I don't mistake me greatly this little person and I have also met before." here Ozma touched her Magic Belt, which she never stayed at home without.

Mose Maxton appeared in his normal shape, clothed and in his right mind. He dropped to one knee and inclined his head. He'd learned his lesson.

Ozma placed a kind hand on that head and said, "Arise, my young friend. I shall never more remember our former hatred, so thrive I and mine."

The Girl Ruler even chanced to recall that her own creation and favorite, the remarkable sawhorse of Oz, had played no inconsiderable part in the adventure just completed. She went outside and said Hello to him. It was such a fine day—

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and so early yet. Ozma was almost tempted to ride off madly on Sawks and tidy up on her own that loose end that still dangled in the vicinity of Mount Munch. However, she thought better of it.

No, the new arrivals must have a proper reception, with cake and oz-cream and the lot, and made to feel properly welcome. The little Queen went back inside to her retinue and then led the way to the orangery, where high tea was served (though it was still scarcely lunchtime).

During the festivities Beenie slipped out for a few minutes and returned to give the assembled court its final little excitement of the day. All during the run from Fuddlecumjig (the Dromedary lolloping behind) Beenie had sat with the fabric of the live but substanceless Second Scarecrow neatly folded on her lap, and her hands lying lightly and lovingly upon him. Now she donned her friend for the last time and made her entrance.

There was a burst of delighted applause at the appearance of a Scarecrow who was more like the original man of straw than he was himself. If that sounds like a paradox, read on a bit. The popular acclamation was redoubled as the Second Scarecrow, with rubber-legged gait and a trickling sound of straw, advanced to extend a softgloved hand to the cotton-filled one of its other self. "How do you do?" said both effigies courteously.

Then they sat down side by side and nobody could tell them apart. The Wizard of Oz put down his cup with a clatter. "Most edifying," he praised. "And most mystifying."

"How do you explain it, Oz?" asked Princess Ozma from her place at the head of the table.

"I don't. It's a total enigma to me."

"Me too. I've thought and thought, ever since I met this 'Miss Scarecrow' on Estic all those weeks ago," recalled Ozma. "I was struck then by the fantastic resemblance—except for the hair—between our familiar old friend and our—er, new one. They are so precisely alike that one can't help but be-

lieve they came from the same source."

"But we did," young Sabrina ventured to insert. "During the trip Mr. Lawrence here told me all the details of how he was rejuvenated through the... application of a portrait by Mr. John R. Neill. So was I!"

Everyone was agog to know particulars so Beenie re-retailed everything the reader has learned from Chapter Three.

(We'll wait while you reread that.)

Ready? "How amusing," said the Queen of Oz. "So there were two portraits! Mr. Neill never said a thing when he dispatched his picture to us to hang in the Royal Gallery."

"Maybe he didn't want to arouse any question," suggested Princess Dorothy, "as to whether you were getting an original."

"But it *was* an original," protested the girl ruler.

"But was it *the* original?" persisted Dot annoyingly.

Everybody looked paff. How could they possibly tell?

"I *know* it was!" insisted Ozma. "I used the very word—!" Here the fairy blanched and broke off. 'Stricken' was the word for how she looked. It almost seemed she was going to break into tears.

"Wizard," she managed to get out finally, "what was the form of words you used in summoning to life the painted image of our old friend?"

(Here the reader may perhaps want to review Chapter Two as well.)

"Why, I don't know that I did use any form of words," replied the savant. "We just ran a layer of Permalife over the image in the painting, cut it out, attached it all around to the living remains of our dear old—if slightly tottery—friend, and violà."

"And I helped'," reminded Queen Ozma.

"Oh, everybody helped a bit," dismissed Diggs.

"No. I helped a lot," pursued the fairy, "though perhaps not with *that* particular bringing-to-life. I recall my words as

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though they were yesterday. I touched the Magic Belt, which some of you may remember I was wearing that day in the room next door." The girl waved a hand in a general direction. "I pronounced, silently but apparently effectively: 'I command the original oil portrait of the Scarecrow of Oz by John Rea Neill to assume permanent and ineradicable life.'

"It happened—far away in an attic in New Jersey."

Beenie couldn't help looking around the assemblage of her friends with a certain smirk. She was the 'real' Scarecrow after all.

### c h a p t e r t h i r t y - t h r e e

“Should we or shouldn’t we?”

Sabrina Amerul and Mose Maxton were asking each other this question—and hanging on each other’s reply.

“Oh, weez,” groaned Beenie sadly. “It says in the GOGTRAA that visitors to Oz, after all the loose ends of the plot are tied up, can’t wait to get back to their home towns however dreary these may be. So I suppose...”

“Nuts,” said Mose, just as rudely forthright as ever. “Think of it: the Dromedary with maybe the old captain aboard him, the Red Wagon with Dorothy and Tik-Tok and one or two Scarecrows in it, and possibly even Polychrome, invited back from that fantastic castle in the clouds, will be heading east toward Mount Munch or beyond to bring the word to Malchor to avast and belay—and we won’t be there.”

Beenie burst into tears. She knew, dear child, that this was the high point of her life. After a sojourn in fabulous Oz what could any normal life be but, slowly or faster, a trip downhill? To leave it before the last ride had been ridden on: how could anyone bear to?

“I wonder: do you suppose—would Ozma send a message?”

“I’m sure she would if she could. I noticed the Shaggy Man’s old telegraph ticker is still in working order—in the Museum wing.”

“Dad once mentioned that the Western Union office in Flanders closed down about the time I was born.”

“Is there a xeroxing shop in that town?”

“Hunh? Yeah, sure: Kwik-Kopy. Dad gets his printing done there.”

“Print shops always have a fax machine—and this queen girl has too. I saw it in her office. Come on!”

Mose grabbed Beenie’s hand and they tore outside. Ozma was standing at the estrade railing with her green lawn handkerchief raised. Tik-Tok at the reins had just called “Gid-dip!”



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Ten words to the fairy ruler, then the two adventurers  
raced on down the drive after the Red Wagon.

“Wait for us!... Oh, wait for us...”

Weekiwatchee: 1971  
Bunkeflostrand: 5 November 1996

