



The CARELESS
KANGAROO
of OZ

The Oz Book for 1912

founded on & continuing the
stories by

March Laumer

The Vanitas Press



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As they rode along the pretty green lane toward Fuddlecumjig, they espied a kangaroo sitting by the roadside. The poor animal had its face covered with both its front paws and was crying to bitterly that the tears coursed down its cheeks in two tiny streams and trickled across the road where they formed a pool in a small hollow.

The Sawhorse stopped short at this pitiful sight and Dorothy cried out, with ready sympathy: "What's the matter, Kangaroo?"

"Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo!" wailed the kangaroo; "I've lost my mi-mi-mi— Oh, boo-hoo! Boo-hoo!"

"Poor thing," said the Wizard, "she's lost her mister. It's probably her husband, and he's dead."

"No, no, no!" sobbed the kangaroo. "It—it isn't that. I've lost my mi-mi— Oh, boo-hoo!"

"I know," said the Shaggy Man; "she's lost her mirror."

"No; it's my mi-mi-mi— Boo hoo! My mi— Oh, boo-hoo!" and the kangaroo cried harder than ever.

"It must be her mince pie," suggested Aunt Em.

"Or her milk toast," proposed Uncle Henry.

"I've lost my mi-mi-mittens!" said the kangaroo, getting it out at last.

"Oh!" cried the Yellow Hen, with a cackle of relief. "Why didn't you say so before?"

"Boo-hoo! I—I couldn't," answered the kangaroo.

"But, see here," said Dorothy, "you don't need mittens this warm weather."

"Yes, indeed I do," replied the animal, stopping her sobs and removing her paws from her face to look at the little girl reproachfully. "My hands will get all sunburned and tanned without my mittens, and I've worn them so long that I'll probably catch cold without them."

"Nonsense!" said Dorothy. "I never heard before of any kangaroo wearing mittens."

"Didn't you?" asked the animal, as if surprised.

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"Never!" repeated the girl. "And you'll probably make yourself sick if you don't stop crying. Where do you live?"

"About two miles beyond Fuddlecumjig," was the answer. "Grandmother Gnit made me the mittens, and she's one of the Fuddles."

"Well, you'd better go home now, and perhaps the old lady will make you another pair," suggested Dorothy. "We're on our way to Fuddlecumjig, and you may hop along beside us."

So they rode on, and the kangaroo hopped beside the red wagon and seemed quickly to have forgotten her loss. By and by the Wizard said to the animal:

"Are the Fuddles nice people?"

"Oh, very nice," answered the kangaroo; "that is, when they're properly put together. But they get dreadfully scattered and mixed up, at times, and then you can't do anything with them."

"What do you mean by their getting scattered?" inquired Dorothy.

"Why, they're made in a good many small pieces," explained the kangaroo, "and whenever any stranger comes near them they have a habit of falling apart and scattering themselves around. That's when they get so dreadfully mixed, and it's a hard puzzle to put them together again."

"Who usually puts them together?" asked Omby Amby.

"Anyone who is able to match the pieces. I sometimes put Grandmother Gnit together myself, because I know her so well I can tell every piece that belongs to her. Then, when she's all matched, she knits for me, and that's how she made my mittens. But it took a good many days' hard knitting, and I had to put Grandmother together a good many times, because every time I came near she'd scatter herself."

"I should think she would get used to your coming and not be afraid," said Dorothy.

"It isn't that," replied the kangaroo. "They're not a bit afraid, when they're put together, and usually they're very jolly and pleasant. It's just a habit they have, to scatter themselves, and if they didn't do it they wouldn't be Fuddles."

The travelers thought upon this quite seriously for a time, while the Sawhorse continued to carry them rapidly forward. Then Aunt Em remarked: "I don't see much use our visitin' these Fuddles. If we find them scattered, all we can do is sweep 'em up, and then go about our business."

"Oh, I b'lieve we'd better go on," replied Dorothy. "I'm getting hungry, and we must try to get some luncheon at Fuddlecumjig. Perhaps the food won't be scattered as badly as the people."

"You'll find plenty to eat there," declared the kangaroo, hopping along in big bounds because the Sawhorse was going so fast; "and they have a fine cook, too, if you can manage to put him together. There's the town now—just ahead of us!"

They looked ahead and saw a group of very pretty houses standing in a green field a little apart from the main road.

"Some Munchkins came here a few days ago a matched a lot of people together," said the kangaroo. "I think they are together yet, and if you go softly, without making any noise, perhaps they won't scatter."

"Let's try it," suggested the Wizard.

So they stopped the Sawhorse and got out of the wagon and, after bidding good-bye to the kangaroo, who hopped away home, they entered the field and very cautiously approached the group of houses.

"I'm a crazy confused cowering kind of a creature," declared the kangaroo, stopping short on her door-step, "too conscientious by half." She drummed with her left foot impatiently. "Why in the world did I come hopping home now just because that girl said so? She can't know what my priorities are! What am I supposed to do at home? I can't find my mittens here. They're lost—on the road! At least, I'm sure I had them with me when I started out this morning. Or did I? I remember thinking it was a little overcast and the danger not so great today. And yet! I never stir out of the house without them."

The kangaroo lived in a house, not at all a traditional thing for kangaroos to do. Normally they just bed down in a gum thicket for a few hours, then leap on their merry way. Their children, tender things, have their traveling home with them, of course, until they are old enough to throw off a home forever.

"Why have I even got a home, let alone a house?" pondered the animal. "Just because that girl assumed I did? But no, that's silly. I had this house before I ever dreamed of her."

Yet the kangaroo remained pensive, trying to think just why she did have a house. "I've always lived here," she remembered, "—at least as far back as I know anything of. And why *shouldn't* I live here—if I choose!" She retreated off the wooden stoop and surveyed the structure: tall and narrow, close in amongst, indeed immediately confined by, a copse of narrow and tall eucalyptus trees. "It suits me!" she cried, and admired the four stories, the brown-red paint job covering what she knew to be mellow smooth soapy wood like a sort of harder balsa, with its central spiral ramp for easy access, and a plethora of holes in the walls for extruding her tail, which was quite as long as she was tall and got in the way when she was house-keeping.

"I like it here! And I'll stay!" she declared. "And yet—oh, how shall I speak it? I must be torn from it. I *must* have mittens,

the old ones or new, and I should have gone to Grandma Gnit immediately, right along of that girl and her funny old companions, and not come hopping home crest-fallen because she proposed it.

"Never mind," she said to herself, taking fresh courage, or at least determination. "I'll just get dinner for the children and then I'll be on my way back to Fuddlecumjig. "Plonch!" she cried. "Zelix! Tronto! Meluel! Ophrid!... Where are you all? Pesky things." The caring mother kangaroo's own name was Mar, spelled with two Rs or sometimes with one.

She was but half an hour in preparing curried kedgerree with quince conserves. By that time the youngsters had turned up, bored and discontented with all things, as youth traditionally is. During the meal each was simultaneously busy with his own affair. Zelix was stringing a lute, Tronto was pucking a boiled cat, Ophrid studied a volume of plainsong chants, while Meluel and Plonch played five-dimensional chess. Mar looked on.

Then she shooed them out of doors, or upstairs, as the case might be, and set out herself the two and a quarter miles to the town of the Fuddles, keeping her paws stuffed in her pouch the while for greater protection. After so many confinements, her pouch was capacious, not to say baggy, and no trouble to keep paws in jauntily as one jaunted along.

"At any rate," the kangaroo consoled herself, "I'm not cap-tious, calculating, or callous. Neither am I cranky, conceited, carnivorous, or criminal. I like to think I'm not conniving either." But her countenance clouded over. "Let's face it. I could be calmer, more complacent. And oh! to be more canny, cau-tious, and capable!"

The travelers—well, to be quite candid we should say “tourists,” though the word, alas, is already getting a disagreeable flavor—the tourists slept well, as usual, in their tents that night, after their day’s adventures. All except one of them. That was the curiously designated “Shaggy Man.” He was shaggy all right, but there was more to him than that. He ought to have had a name of his own.

Shag (we’ll call him so; we can’t keep saying “the Shaggy Man” hundreds of times without sounding precious): Shag couldn’t sleep because of a kangaroo. The encounter with the antipodean animal had brought on in him sharp pangs of nostalgia. How vividly were now brought back all his adventures in Australia. From there, after a while, his mind went on to other recollections, and he lay all night going over his past life. He had rich memories, but he also had regrets. He’d been footloose, a wanderer, a “knight of the road,” but also let us be fair; a tramp, a hobo, with all the notable characteristics of your hobo.

Take his shags, for instance. “Shaggy” heads (no more of the man was ever revealed in print, so we have no information on how shaggy he was below his neck) are heads that hardly know a comb or scissors. In other words, they are sloppy and unkempt. If hair and beard were sometimes trimmed, a man might still be noticeably hirsute, yet he wouldn’t be “shaggy.”

Then clothes. Shaggy clothes are ones that are in tatters. Self-respecting gentlemen of the road didn’t get that way. Patched but clean. Unpatched isn’t much better than out and out dingy. Shags can’t be washed; they tend to fall off during scrubbing. The least burdened tramp can keep a needle and thread behind his lapel.

If Shag was as tattered and unkempt as a hobo and wanted nothing better than that (even when all dolled up in the Emerald City he wore artificial shags in both hair and clothes), he may have shared other recurring traits of such people. He did. He carried no luggage, not even a bandanna on a stick. He never cared much where he laid his head, or worried about reaching a desti-

nation (if he had one). He accepted whatever hospitality was offered, cheerfully and without thinking of offering anything, any service, in return. And he was sticky-fingered.

An example of this last is how he'd once stolen a love magnet from a young lady in Butterfield, Kansas. It was a naughty thing to do but, tramp-like, the Shaggy Man didn't let it bother him. He reasoned in one of the ways much folks do: either they don't think about the after-effects of their pilfering at all, or else they persuade themselves that their victims are just as well off as before their loss. Shag did the latter.

He liked to think that the young lady never missed her magnet. The young lady's name was Penelope Thacker. (Her neighbors, knowing no better, called her "Penny-loap," as who would say [who wouldn't?] "cally-cap," "hyper-bowl," "sin-droam.") Penelope's dad was a magnet maker. Indeed, Butterfield was known as the magnet capital of the Central Midwest. But he wasn't a magician. How does it happen then that he could make a magnet that would magically and ineluctibly draw to the bearer of it the true love of whatever looked upon him?

It came about in this way. There's a little magic in dying. Not a very great deal and certainly not altogether pleasant, but it's magic right enough. The state of affairs that something that could propel itself about the earth where it willed and *by* its will should suddenly and totally lose that ability: that's magic. This is a thing rare in nature: that an entity wholly replete with a certain characteristic should, in a stroke, completely lose that characteristic. What is magic (at least, one form of magic) but that?

Mr. Thacker died in the following way: he was at work with his magnetmaker, "stroking" all into one direction the ions in a newly forged magnet the size of a playing card, when a bandit (common in Kansas in the period; maybe it was one of the Daltons?) entered the shop. He was rifling the till in the (for the moment unoccupied) sales room when he heard a sound in the rear workshop.

It was old man Thacker, patiently foot-pedaling the magnetometer and paying regrettably little attention to what was going

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on in the public part of his store.

The bandit tiptoed, craned his neck around the door opening, took one look, and shot Thacker (like Jesse James) in the back. Then he coolly finished emptying the cash register and went on to the next stop in his rounds. He was never caught. Too bad, but there you are.

Mr. Thacker leaned quietly over his work bench, supported on his high stool, and spilt his heart's blood all over the magnet in question. If that wasn't enough to impart a quality to a piece of metal, I don't know what is. The magnet thenceforth had an inexorable attraction for any and every heart that came near it.

The first one that came near it was that of the magnet-maker's daughter, Penelope. Oh, but that heart beat when it understood how another heart had stopped. Thenceforward Mr. Thacker's last magnet was inordinately valued by the young woman, who kept it always near her. She couldn't bear to wipe away the loved blood that had dried so strangely hard and lacquer-like upon it. Nor did the magnet ever after lose its deep red hue.

It was only gradually, as time went on, that Penelope realized the uncanny nature of her amulet. Surprisingly, it bothered her, at the same time that it fascinated her. What use to a charming young lady who had already won all the hearts in her little town was a magnet that won hearts?

You can be sure her fiancé was not pleased. Still, she would go on wearing it, as a dear memorial to her dad whom she had loved even more than she did her jealous swain. The latter was a watch repairman and jeweler, as well (like most businessmen in Butterfield) as a magnet-maker in a small way on the side. She had him attach a safety catch to the love magnet so she could wear it as a brooch.

Among the hearts that Penelope won in Butterfield was that of a plain (let's be honest: ugly) young man who worked as assistant to her fiancé. He had turned up in the town some months earlier, claiming to be from Colorado and an accomplished watchmaker. Despite his unprepossessing appearance: great goggle eyes, broad flattened nose, and wide negroid mouth, the jeweler hired

him. It took a few days to ascertain that the new employee knew nothing about watches but in the same few days the intelligent Coloradan had picked up a good deal by observing his boss at work. He proved himself useful enough to be kept on.

Of course the newcomer had soon made the acquaintance of Miss Penelope Thacker. Girls of that age meant nothing to him but he could not deny that she was a very charming fiancée for his employer. Then came the awful day of the hit-and-run murder. The Coloradan actually saw the departing killer on the street minutes after the crime, but only realized it too late.

It was a week later that the jeweler showed his workman the dull-shiny magnet and asked him to heat the soldering iron. Thereafter the Coloradan (we still don't know what his name was) often saw the girl about town wearing her brooch, and his indifference straightway flamed to passion.

That led to the break-up of his career in Butterfield, of course. When he began openly to court the jeweler's lady friend, the jeweler (more deeply than ever in love with Penelope, like, by now, everyone else in Butterfield) asked him not to remain at his shop any longer or indeed even in the town.

Sadly, the Coloradan went for a last interview with the girl of his dreams. Over tea they talked of the strangeness of her new ornament.

"It must be the magnet brooch," Penelope reasoned. "Of course people seemed to like me before. Then everyone showed greater kindness and tenderness than ever when Dad died. But I realize now it was only after I began to wear the brooch that total strangers would walk up to me and declare their love. Take yourself—and the Breech twins, both of them—and the Hoag family, all fifteen, men, women, and children! It's not natural. And though it's lovely to be liked, I really don't need eight fiancés."

The poor suitor from Colorado realized it was his congé. Immediately his true heart was torn with altruism. As a last service to his lady he would relieve her of the troublesome amulet.

But then she spoke again: "Of course I could never part with the magnet. Oh, it would break my heart! That's my darling father's

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blood on it; all I have left of him. I shall wear it next to my heart 'til I die."

'Oh, no, you won't,' thought the dismissed suitor and his true heart was torn with greed. He suddenly realized it was the magnet, he wanted, not the girl.

That very night he entered the Thacker residence with a bit of chloroform, went to Penelope's room, and had his way with her brooch.

The next day, miles away, he let his beard grow, the better to throw pursuers off the trail.

Ever since, it had grown and grown, getting shaggier and shaggier.

It was at-home day on Cloud Nine. The Rainbow had said, "Let it be! The earth doesn't have to have a rainbow *every* time it rains. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it doesn't anyway. We'll just be cozy here at home today."

"Oh, grand," said Alouette, his daughter. "Shall we have people in? seeing we're having an at-home."

"Why not? Whom did you have in mind?"

"I thought it would be nice if Grandmother Spray and Grandad Sol could come."

"Both of them?" asked Dad Rainbow. "You know what happens whenever those two get together. I wouldn't have much of a holiday. I'd have to be out there doing the splits and bends the whole time."

"Of course," said his daughter Prism. "Let's just have one of them. What about Grandad?"

The Rainbow looked upward with a smile. "He's already invited himself, you see," and he pointed with blue into the meridional sky.

"Oh, Dad," pleaded Lucy, "can't Mother come? We so rarely get to be with her, close up."

The Rainbow looked soberly down at Mother Earth. "She's always there, to be counted on when you need her. But she's so big. She can't really 'go' anywhere—except on her yearly round through space. When I meet her it's just fleetingly: a touch of a finger or a toe."

Daughter Arcenciel looked sceptical. "Really, Dad? Then where did we come from? You've always said Earth was our mother, and that's the reason we've got any substance at all."

Of course Daddy Rainbow had told the story lots of times, but the girls loved to hear it again and while Polychrome wrote the invitations he related it once more.

"You girls are Africans," he said. That always got a laugh. The maidens would look at each other trying to see any hints of a dark tint but though they were (naturally) every color of the rain-

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bow none of them were brown or black. (Just so those two colors wouldn't feel left out Poly and several of the others always wore a little dark skull-cap.)

"It was a long time ago," said the Rainbow iridescently. At home he was just a confused mass of colors. Even the girls couldn't tell head or tail of him. But his presence warmed them.

"Thousands of years," put in Polychrome solemnly and wiped a tear from her cheek.

"That's right. Not to say millions. There was the most frightful earthquake and a great fissure opened in the earth: hundreds of yards deep at its ultimate roots. That was not so unusual—in the whole history of the planet—but what was unusual, even almost unique, was that the crack lay square across the course of a mighty river a mile wide. When the dust cleared it was seen (by any wandering animal that might have been in the vicinity) that the river now crashed four-square into the great new ravine, while its former lower course had become merely dry ground.

"The spray that boiled up half a mile high was the natural home of rainbows. I rushed to the spot and arc'ed down into the great orifice, doing my duty. As it happened, it was a morning of fine weather so I was stuck there all day, 'til blessed evening came and my sister Moonbow could relieve me on duty.

"Some months later, when the rainy season ended and sunshine made my presence again necessary on the Zambezi, what was my amazement when I arrived to hear a voice calling, 'Father! Father!' and I saw a little girl standing on the brink of the falls and waving to me. It was Pluvial, the eldest of my children," and here he patted benevolently the hand of the maturest-appearing of the crowd of rain maidens.

"A number of times after that," Dad Rainbow went on, "the same thing happened—"

"Twenty in all," put in Arcenciel.

"That's right; there are twenty of you, aren't there?" agreed the old bow genially.

"Why didn't you have any boys, Daddy?" asked Lucy.

"That's a good question, my dear," said her parent. "I think I

used to ask myself that—thousands of years ago. But now it's been so long, I've just got used to it and it merely seems natural that the rainbow should have only daughters."

"Maybe," offered the slightly more worldly-wise Arcobaleno, "it's so we wouldn't always be reminded of boys—and grieve because we can never marry."

At this there was a loud sob from Polychrome, who flung down her pen and buried her face in her arms. The others all looked at each other speechless. "What in the sky—!" cried Father Rainbow, and her sisters all rushed to surround the weeping girl.

"Why, she's heart-broken!"

"What ever for?"

"She *has* been acting down in the dumps for weeks."

"Months!"

"Seems like a year to me."

"I've caught her crying before."

"Have you? When was that?"

"Did she say why?"

"I know something!"

"Well, tell us."

"I think we all know something."

"What?"

"It's ever since she had that accidental stay on earth."

"That's right! She's never been the same since then."

"What do you suppose could have happened?"

"I think she met someone."

"Naturally she must have met *somebody*."

"She means somebody special."

"Oh, Poly, do tell us *who*!"

The worst of Polychrome's crying jag passed while her sisters spoke. Now she raised her haggard face, her eyes great opalescent pools, and took the hand of her favorite sister Aquarelle. "Oh, I love him so much! I can't live without him!" she gasped, and fell to sobbing again worse than ever.

It was half an hour or so before they could get a coherent story out of her. By then Aurora had discarded the invitations. They

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would not be having anyone in to their at-home. The domestic crisis took priority.

The story the lovely rain maiden eventually told was that on her journey on earth, before she could get back to her home in the sky, she had met a certain man.

“What was his name?” said Farvespil.

The others had called him “the Shaggy Man” but he didn’t seem to have any regular name of his own. Poly herself just called him “the Man.”

“What was he like?” asked Iris. “I suppose he was terribly handsome.”

Polychrome described the Shaggy Man exactly as he was. The others looked non-plussed.

“But, Poly dear,” said Arcobaleno, “how did you happen to love *such* a man? He sounds a bit grim to me. You who are all light! a being of air and rain, of color and grace, to love a tangle-haired fellow all in rags, who doesn’t sound as if he ever took a bath...”

But her sister could reassure them on that point she knew for a fact that the Shaggy Man had bathed in a perfumed tub at the end of their travels together. And as for why she loved him: it was because he carried a Love Magnet and no one meeting him could do anything else.

“Oh, it’s mechanical,” pooh-poohed Opal. “It’s just a magic spell. You don’t really love *him*: you’re just bewitched!”

That didn’t make any difference to Polychrome. The feeling was just as violent, no matter its origins. She knew she couldn’t be happy until she had seen him again.

“But what good would that do?” protested Aquarelle, who was feeling a bit jealous. “You could never marry. There are just so many things separating you. He’s a mortal, and you don’t share any of the same interests, and I doubt very much if he could walk on air, not to mention living in the sky.”

But in her present state of mind Polychrome was prepared to desert her rainbow home and live always on earth just to be near her dear Shaggy Man. She only had one reservation

“What’s that, dear?” asked Regenvlaag. “That you know nothing about his family?”

As it happened, the rainbow’s traveling daughter, did know something about the Man’s family. During their wanderings together he had related facts about his home life in distant days before he took to the road. His father had been a miner, forty-niner, prospecting for whatever precious metals might turn up in the western American territories. His luck was not good but no worse than that he could afford to marry, and because the saloon-keeper’s daughter he wedded lived in Colorado he settled down there.

Other than a daughter, Clementine, the future Shaggy Man was their eldest child. Curiously, he was not a shaggy boy. His mother, who had a driving yen for respectability (it came on her just *after* her marriage to the feckless prospector), also suffered from a cleanliness mania and insisted on keeping her children scrubbed and clipped to within an inch of their lives. Such childhood influences often leave their marks the child makes it an ideal to feel and do exactly the opposite.

“Anyway,” laughed Lucy, “he knows what water *is*.”

Poly was able to confirm that. It seemed the Shaggy Man had demonstrated it on their journey. The poor man fell into a Truth Pond—and didn’t drown! He showed himself to be a capable swimmer.

“Well, then,” wondered Prism, “what’s the ‘reservation’ you have about him?”

It turned out that the Man was too young for Polychrome!

“Too young?!” exclaimed Pluvia, who knew what it was like to be eldest. “I thought you said he was sixty.”

With all that white hair and beard the Shaggy Man actually looked seventy but Polychrome could reveal that the man of her dreams had said he was in fact no older than fifty. His muscular athleticism gave the lie to his premature de-coloring.

“Where do you come up with ‘sixty’ then?” enquired Vattenande.

That was just Polychrome’s own private reckoning. When she

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herself was thousands of years old (without looking it in the least) she didn't want her swain to be a mere child. Even so, the discrepancy was glaring: one of them heavy with age, in fact, but looking and acting like a mere child; the other a mere child by comparison but looking and acting venerable with age.

"Is there no way around it?" asked Naiad confidentially.

All poor Polychrome could think of was to try to accumulate some learning and wisdom so as to seem spiritually (though she could never really look) a little older.

"But, darling," protested Tien Kang, "are you sure that's indicated? Perhaps he loves you just as you are: so young (looking) and lovely."

At that Poly burst into tears again.

"Whatever's the trouble now?" said Raduga with a no-nonsense air.

Then the lovelorn maiden had to confess that she hadn't the faintest idea that the Shaggy Man loved *her*.

"Good heavens!" cried Alouette, "I made sure it was a *reciprocal* affair! How could he help but love you?"

The lovesick girl now was forced to the painful confession that all the falling in love had been on her side. The Man never spoke of women—aside from the one he'd victimized in Kansas. Polychrome had got the idea that he was indifferent—not inimical just quite indifferent to grown women.

"But what a dreadful thing!" cried Sateenkaari. "Not to care about ladies!"

It wasn't only ladies, it seemed. The Shaggy Man had given the impression of being good-naturedly casual about all human relationships. Though he was light-fingered, the man's career as a thief had collided with that as a hobo, and the latter had prevailed. It was no good having a yen for possessions when you wanted to be mobile on the road. The Shaggy Man gave preference to being "lightbacked" over being light-fingered. And if you couldn't afford to collect things you couldn't collect people either, and so better to avoid caring too much about them, the wanderer had stated candidly.

“So what are you going to do now?” wondered Arcenciel.

Thoughtfully Polychrome described her plan. There was just a ray of hope in the fact that the shaggy one’s own life style had altered drastically at the end of the pair’s adventures (if you could call them that) together. He was now decked out in silks and satin, even his shags were artificial, and he was set (by Royal ordinance, no less) to living a sedentary life in a palace.

“How will that change things?” asked Curcubeu.

Her sister explained how now, in his boredom and inactivity, the Shaggy Man would have ample opportunity to collect people, if he should be so inclined. She would arrange to place herself in his way—and let nature take its course.

“Well, good luck, darling,” encouraged her sister Aurora.

“Will you be going to him right away?” enquired Roong.

“Well, no,” admitted Polychrome. “There’s something I have to do first.”

H.M Wogglebug, the noted pedant, added the distinction "T.E." (thoroughly Educated) to his name prematurely. Actually it was not until the completion of his sojourn in the United States[§] that the great scholar could consider himself to be, indeed, thoroughly educated.

Readers of the foot-noted works will have remarked how the insect's adventures (not to mention those of his traveling companions)* break off almost abruptly at books' ends, with no more resolution than the almost pitiful denouement to the wogglebug's one grand passion of the heart. Left with no more of his great love than went to make up a neck-tie (which, however, he guarded always thereafter as the most precious treasure in his possession), the insect turned his back forever on romance. Thenceforth his days would be devoted to the acquisition of something safe, something nobody would try to take away from him, something no one else wanted, i.e., learning.

H.M. rode the rails to the valley of the Mississippi and with the last of his sadly diminished funds enrolled in West Kentucky Christian College; he could afford no better. Even so he had to hire himself out, to make ends meet, as a live exhibit (no dissecting allowed) in Anatomy and Zoölogy classes at the college and furthermore performed incognito at a third-rate theatre in the town which offered vaudeville turns. He had picked up some songs and a soft-shoe number during his more glamorous travels, that now stood him in good stead.

Those were jolly times among the college students in the sunshine of their happy youth. Golden days full of gaiety and full of truth. Days of youth and love. Oh, not romantic love, but love of learning. At least: it was for learning that H.M. had gone to W.K.C. But something unexpected intervened.

[§]See QUEER VISITORS FROM THE LAND OF OZ and THE THIRD BOOK OF OZ. Editor's. notes.

*But see THE QUEER VISITORS' RETURN TO OZ.

Only in his Anatomy class, which the bug attended as student as well as performing as model for, had Wogglebug found the love of study he sought. The old instructor, a Harvard man, who had sat at the feet of O.W. Holmes himself, really valued and delighted in learning. But he seemed to be the only one on campus who did. The insect, after class, would linger in talk with the old man.

"Sir," said Highly (who now stressed his youthfulness; actually he WAS only six years old at this period; and as a youngster he thought of himself by his first name), "I came to West Kentucky to get an education, but I find to my dismay that nobody cares about such things here at the college."

"Indeed?" said Dr. Allwise. "Pray elucidate."

"Well, I mean, all they care about is sports, the boys, that is. The girls admire the fellows that go out for sports. As for studies, the girls are only interested in their art classes. Result: nobody cracks a book."

"We can assume then," said the instructor over his glasses, "that they won't be here very long. They'll fail."

"No, that's the funny part," returned the freshbug. "I learn they stay on for years and years. The more popular the sportsman the longer he remains a student, and the really top sport stars are never allowed to graduate. It would mean the collapse of the teams. And what if we were to go down to defeat before Illinois Normal?!"

"I can see the bug has got you too," laughed the teacher good-humoredly. "Oh, sorry!" he flustered, recalling whom he was addressing. "I do beg your pardon."

The insect could take that in stride. As a collegian of four months' standing he was used to ragging and knew there was nothing to be gained by seeming to mind. But the wavering of his values remained a troubling problem.

"So far in life," he said, "I've staked everything on appearing—even if modesty compels me to say, not actually being—learned. Well, all except for one short period when my attention was directed elsewhere." Highly didn't like to go in to details,

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certainly not with *this* associate, about his passion for the Wagnerian plaid. "But I find my standards changing here. After all, I want to be popular!"

Yes, the instructor could see that. The "bug" of campus thinking had, to that extent, got to him as well.

"And nobody likes a grind," pursued the wogglebug. "No girl will date me!" he mourned. Since the affair of the plaid H.M. didn't care about girls as girls, but the extent to which they would date you was the measure of your popularity. "It's because I'm the four-eyed type."

"Four-eyed?" queried the teacher. He had noted his unusual pupil's four arms but had not so far seen four eyes.

"Yes: wear glasses," explained the bug. That was campus slang that was just coming in in 1905; it had reached the student but not yet the instructor. "Although actually I don't. However, they see me as the academic sort, and so I don't get dated." Amour propre forbade him to believe girls wouldn't go out with him because he was a bug. "I want more than anything to be dated and popular," he ended.

"Alas," said Instructor Allwise. "I suppose it is the end, then, of our pleasant relationship. You'll never get popular by being educated... Are you going out for sports then?"

"Well, I *had* thought of pole-vaulting—or track in general. My wings would come in useful there. I've even dreamed there might be a slot for me on the football team itself—as flying tackle. Actually, it's a shame there's no Intermural Flying here at W.K.C."

"Yes, there you'd be in a class by yourself," agreed the teacher amiably.

That was the end of Wogglebug's soul-searching. He went over completely to the worship of Sports as the all-highest in acadème: that and a bit of Art too, of course.

Highly had only two years at West Kentucky before being called home by his anxious sovereign, who couldn't understand where he had got to.

Already on the completion of the first adventures together of H.M. Wogglebug and his Queen, the new-crowned Ozma, the

latter had named him Public Educator to the youth of Oz. Now the girl ruler found to her chagrin that education in her native land was going to heck in a hand-cart due to the absence in foreign lands of her czar of schools.

Forced to it by the emergency, the princess had called-in the also celebrated Professor Nowitall as interim head of her Department of Public Instruction. He was after all H.M. Wogglebug's original teacher and was still known throughout the land as a most famous scholar.

Naturally a lecturer so in demand as Professor N. was not employed full-time as teacher at a one-room school-house full of inattentive and misbehaving grade-school pupils in the land of the Winkies. Nowitall had only been there for a fortnight as guest lecturer but at least one of his hearers (at *very* "least": the tiny wogglebug was only one centimeter long at the time he first "enrolled") had sucked the instruction to him like a sponge. He was well prepared to be "graduated" out of all proportion by the time he happened to crawl under the lens of the magic lantern.

Professor Nowitall and Mr. Wogglebug (he did not grant himself his own professorship until some years later) never met again before the latter's departure for the United States. Actually, after the bloodless revolution that brought Ozma to power, and the subsequent overhauling of the forms of government in Oz, Professor Eydoant (such was the human academic's modest given name) had withdrawn from public life in some pique at not having, himself, as Oz's best-known intellectual, been invited to be chief of the new Education Department, rather than his erstwhile pupil.

But now at last came the time of his place in the sun. And yet: Nowitall's gifts were scholarly, not administrative. He early became almost as great an absentee as his colleague in America. The savant could never resist an invitation to speak at the Quadling School of Toddlers or at Gillikin Grammar. And what he *really* wanted was to get ensconced behind ivy-covered walls and do research. He had no patience with the red tape of government procedure, which, during his tenure at the Department, accumu-

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lated to a ball seven feet in diameter. It was the principal material attraction for visitors and sight-seers at Public Instruction.

When Ozma discovered that, far from education's spreading into every nook and cranny of the magic land, centers of learning such as the Winkie Workshop, the Dainty China Academy, or the Munchkin School of Mines were being disestablished at the rate of one a week, she panicked. Hastily she summoned up an image of the wogglebug in the Magic Picture. She had occasionally observed him there—without quite knowing where “there” was. Now she set Jellia Jamb and palace-guardsmen Omby Amby to watching the pictured insect round the clock until something should reveal just which was the roving Ozite's campus of choice.

It was little Jellia, Ozma's dark-green-haired (dyed; Jellia, a native of the North, actually from nature's hand had light lavender hair) maid and personal attendant, who, bleary-eyed, brought the Princess the news at five one morning. “I saw him checking books out of the college library,” (in a different time zone far away) she reported. “I could just make out the printing on the ownership stamp imprint in the back of one volume. He's at West Kentucky Christian College at Cay Why, K.Y.”

“Oh, good,” exclaimed the ruler. “I must get a message through to him at once!” Then, thoughtfully, as the little fairy stretched, leaning back against her satin pillows, “By the way, did you happen to see which works had aroused our learned friend's interest?”

“Why, yes,” said Jellia wonderingly, “he was going to read ‘Memoirs of the Fifty-Yard Line’ and ‘That Winning Streak’.”

Eureka, the White Kitten, was furious. She stamped her foot in a rage—but being a cat’s foot it made no sound and by no means expressed its owner’s dissatisfaction. So she stamped two feet together. No better! The poor creature found she was unable to stamp three feet at once. But four... Yes: by leaping into the air she could come down on all fours. She knotted her feet into fists as she descended. But alack! that only bruised her knuckles when she landed and it didn’t sound any more like a stamp than the same action performed with fewer limbs.

The cat, who possessed her share of sullen dignity, stopped her gyrations. What if someone came in and saw her leaping up and down in a frenzy? She laughed bitterly. No one was going to come in. That was just it. The farmhouse had been deserted for a week. She was mistress of all she surveyed, and that was precious little; a two-story unpainted cottage on the Kansas plain, with absolutely nothing in it that could entertain a kitten.

Well, there WAS the old woman Emma’s ball of pin yarn and the only-just-began sock (or was it a scarf?) that she had left lying when she suddenly vanished from her home. But Eureka had already pulled and batted the ball all around the room until it lay, completely de-balled and in one mad tangle, about the floor, nearly concealing it. There was no fun left there.

Yes, Em had vanished, and not figuratively; literally. The cat had been lying on a chair, idly purring and casually looking at her mistress when the disappearance took place. Hence, she knew it was not as ordinary case of mislaying a person, nor yet of her being strayed or stolen. Well, “stolen” perhaps! but not by anybody in the mundane real world.

Eureka had enough experience of magic lands to know that what had happened to Mrs. Emma was, an enchantment. That led her on naturally to suppose that Oz had something to do with it. Yes, surely it did; what convinced her even more was the equally unexplained disappearance of the cat’s real owner (insofar as any cat, reflected Eureka, can be said to be “owned”) a few days

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previously. Her owner and that owner's own owned dog, Toto.

That was what really made Eureka hopping mad. Dorothy had gone to Oz *again* with that wretched cur. It was devastating to the kitten's amour propre (cats, as well as wogglebugs, had that and much more sot) to think that a dog was valued above her. Well, admittedly Dorothy had had the dog longer and in fairness Eureka had to allow that old things might possess a familiarity value and thus make a claim on affection. Dorothy and Toto had been together for eight years that the kitten knew of (and indeed perhaps longer) before the girl and the kitten met in Australia.

But afterwards! Eureka assumed she would naturally reign supreme in her young mistress' heart even after their return together (for the second time) to the United States and to the Kansas farm, where, it is true, the cat had heard rumors that a curly black dog lurked.

The meeting of Eureka and Toto was historic (although not hitherto recorded). The two hated each other on sight. Toto had been feeling aggrieved ever since his beloved Dorothy had gone off to Australia without him. He adopted a don't-care attitude but old Em, the only one of the human family remaining on the farm at that period, could see how he drooped. What was his indignation when he understood, through overheard conversations of Em with neighbors, that Dorothy had gone on to have not just one but *two* books' worth of adventures in Oz without him.

Toto was not touched by any awareness that readers found it a relief not to have him, for the space of two whole books, rushing out to attack mice, beetles, chickens, rabbits, and even lions which one might have liked to hear more of but for his ill-timed interventions. Though he never did anything charming or ever said anything memorable (or at all!), the dog supposed his mistress' stated devotion to him remained total. (That, in fact, was how he got his name, which signifies "all" or "entirety".)

What was his fury then to find himself expected to welcome home, after nearly a year's absence, a Dorothy who clasped in her arms an insolent white creature that glanced down at him coolly through supercilious blue eyes and then turned away

her head in boredom.

Toto scarcely allowed his ears to be tousled by the returning girl before he dashed away in hot pursuit of the kitten, who ran up a tree and then with all claws clinging gazed down at him in perfect safety and utmost hatred. From that day it was total and unrelenting war between the two.

Eureka, if she had permitted herself to be quite impartial, would have admitted that it was natural that Dot's next adventure should have had Toto as participant, starting as it did by the girl's walking unsuspectingly down the road. Cats are not celebrated as walking companions, while dogs are. (Let be that Toto started off on that journey in somebody's pocket, not self-propelled.) But there was absolutely no reason why her mistress should have gone off the following and *final* time without, as far as Eureka could determine, giving her cat the slightest thought.

Now it was the turn of the kitten (only by courtesy so called; after two years in a non-fairyland—and that is what Eureka had passed—every kitten is a cat, if it still survives) to droop, and of Em and Henry both to observe it. "Look at that, Em," said the farmer, "Dorothy's gone again—and the cat notices it."

"Yep, she's gone right off her feed," concurred the goodwife, "and mostly just lies on the girl's, bed, *not* purring."

"I'm surprised," said Henry. "I always thought she was a kinda' superior-actin' animal that didn't seem to care a thing about anybody—except for despisin' Toto."

"She showed good sense there," sniffed Em; "tiresome yappy thing." Dorothy's aunt had not been fond of the dog ever since he had been the cause of her niece's being carried off in a storm in the first place, with all the troubles and long dreary absences by the girl which that had brought in its train. "If I were going to Oz, I'd sooner have the cat with me. It at least, so Dorothy says, had a word to say for itself when need arose."

But the aunt grew thoughtful. "Or better yet, that yellow chicken Dorothy told about. It had more sense than most people. Too bad the girl didn't bring that home with her, instead of a yappy dog or a stuck-up cat." Emma liked chickens; after all, she had

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raised them for nearly forty years, ever since her girlhood and even in the surroundings of a town, and she knew the likes of leghorns and the habits of hamburgs.

Alas, when Em came to be snatched away, all untimely and unknowing, from the kitchen sink to Oz, she had no opportunity to select any pet to take with her. Nor did anyone else, in Kansas or Oz, give a thought to the destiny of the cat. Perhaps Princess Ozma may fleetingly have recalled her favorite's favorite but remembering, too, the disagreeable impression the kitten had made on her first visit to Oz, she did not include her in the spell that whisked the elderly farm couple away to the magic land.

And now Eureka was stamping mad, and bored, and also hungry. She, the pampered associate of princesses and magicians, was reduced, for her supper, to chasing mice, which had now boldly invaded the farmhouse. They were tasty enough but it offended the cat's dignity thus to have to engage in "trade." Hunting was respectable work, when you didn't *have* to do it, but when you did it was *declassée*.

Her exercise of stamping concluded, she jumped up on Dorothy's bed and stretched herself out on the pillow. She had now furiously to think. What was she going to do?

So far, she had been left in possession at the farm. Though having returned, much against her impulses, to speechlessness in America, the cat had not forgotten how to understand the language she had handled so capably, even subtly, in other, magic lands. She had caught every word the farm people had uttered in her presence. She very well knew about the missed payments and the looming foreclosure on the mortgage. Any day now the men from the bank would be turning up to see why they hadn't heard from farmer Henry. Eureka wasn't going to wait around and suffer the indignity of being turned off the place.

But where could she go?

Here the proud, self-confident cat, in the privacy of her own house, far from any observing eye, gave way to hurt feelings and, if cats could cry, would have had to wipe abundant tears from her eyes. No one wanted her. No one loved her well enough to take

her with them when they disappeared forever. For now, on the ninth day, Eureka knew it was forever.

Dorothy's absences in Oz had rarely lasted longer than ten days. And never before had her relatives followed her there. It all added up: Dorothy's ever-growing fascination with the magic land, her aunt and uncle's gradual grudging acceptance of the importance of Oz to the young girl (well, not *so* young any more—Dorothy was now sixteen, by anybody's reckoning), and the ever further deteriorating circumstances at the farm. It was a natural: they would all decamp to Oz and live happily ever after.

Only for Eureka was there no place in Oz.

Damn it! there was *going* to be a place in Oz for her. The cat knew perfectly well where she was going. She leapt lightly off the bed and out the window. She left the farmhouse without a backward glance.

Hoppity floppety thop.

The Old Guard thundered down to the sunken road. So much the cultured kangaroo knew from her reading. She liked to think, when she really hit her stride, that the thumping of her feet along the highway resembled more than somewhat the horse-clatter boom of the Old Guard on their way to the relief of Napoleon.

As she flew along she still had time to think, "Mittens, nittens, pittens, quittens, rittens, sittens, tittens, vittens, wittens, yittens, zittens—" There must be a rhyme for "mittens" but if there was one she hadn't come on it yet. Meanwhile, what were all these other things? for the kangaroo was one of your people who think that every word has a meaning. "Nitten", for instance, was a word. Just by pronouncing it you made it so. And having been pronounced and born, "nitten" must at once acquire a meaning. "The mixture may be enriched with a teaspoon of nitten." "The travelers were attacked by a whooping gang of nittens." "Nittens covered the walls and ceiling." Or perhaps "She nittened too much and it injured her health."

That thought led Mar off on a side-track. No, no, it must be "She knitted too much—" or, dear me, was it "gnitted"? She must be careful now, she was getting confused. People did sometimes call her the Confused Kangaroo of Oz; she didn't want the name to stick. And even if "knit/gnit" were different words, that didn't stop "nitten" from being a word on its own.

Actually it *was* a word. It meant "nineteen" in Danish but the kangaroo wasn't to know that. She spoke only Ozish, which is the same as English.

They only received a pittens at the sale of their property. Even so, they had to write out a quittens. And when it was ritten, 'stead o' flitten, they'd be sitten next to her— They *were* words! Well, one had to fudge a bit on the spelling, but the sounds were all right and it was the sounds which were language, when you came right down to it. The first original word came from a mouth, not a pen.

Such cogitations fully occupied the kangaroo's mind the two

and a quarter miles it took her to flash along the road from her home to Fuddlecumjig. There a scene of total chaos met her eyes.

True, a task force of Gillikins, Munchkins, and Winkies who were staying in the neighborhood had been hurriedly called in by one of the Fuddles (the cook), who, observing that he was the last citizen left whole, had pressed the Panic Button just before he too shivered into shards. The Ozites were hard at work reconstructing people and by nightfall perhaps the scene of wild disorder would once more be one of tidy collectedness.

The visit of the party from the Emerald City (including *royalty*) had been just too much for the equanimity of the Fuddles. When the red wagon rolled away with its famous freight the citizens of Fuddlecumjig to a man had dissolved once more in pieces. Unlike most people, they found they could think more clearly, digest their experiences better, when they pulled themselves apart, rather than together.

After her first momentary aback-takenness Mar too pitched in with a will at putting people together. She could get no further in her quest for mittens until Grandmother Gnit was back in one piece and fully functional. The puzzle-solvers had already so far progressed by the time the kangaroo arrived that within a quarter of a further hour Gnathan the cook (always easy to identify by his all-white costume) was back together, and then he could direct the others in the best deployment of their labors.

“Cook, cook!” cried the kangaroo. “Be quick! tell me where Grandma Gnit was when she went to pieces. I have to work on her first thing.”

Gnathan put jaw in hand. “Let me see. I wasn’t with Grandmother when the end came. But at that time of an afternoon she’s usually in her gnot garden. I’d look there.”

With murmured thanks Mar leapt away. She knew the garden well enough: a little plot of ground on the northeast edge of the village where old lady Gnit grew granny’s-knots. And sure enough there were the grey pieces that stemmed from Grandmother’s old-fashioned full-skirted gown. Mar squatted back on her tail and began to reconstruct the dame.

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In just under twenty minutes the job was done. That is to say; almost. During the latter stages of the job she and Mrs. Gnit had been able to chat and laugh together, and when her extremities were fully reassembled Grandmother could even help in the search for still missing pieces of herself. It was she who found her left collar bone and both her skirt pockets. When together the two females reached under a thriving shrub of queen Anne's lace and picked up her jaw piece, the talk flowed like wine only to end in a frightening announcement by the old lady herself.

"I've lost my mind!"

"Oh, no, Mrs. Gnit, say it isn't so," gasped the kangaroo.

"But it *is* so. See, we've looked everywhere. This piece from the back of my head and topknot with just a scrap of my moboap— isn't in the garden anywhere. *You* see that. We've looked."

"But can you be sure? What about in the street or one of the houses?"

"I assure you, I was all there when I came out into the garden. I was gneeling on that little gnoll with my gnuckles in the earth, gnifing up some gnapweed when the urge came. I *gnow* my missing piece is in this garden!"

"We'll look some more then," sighed the kangaroo. "It's clear you won't be able to do me any new mittens without the use of your mind."

"Yes, I'll make you some mittens—when I find that piece. I promised that girl I would."

Mar grinned. "Anyway, there's nothing the matter with your memory, Grandmother! But that girl; I suppose you mean the young lady in the red wagon that was headed this way? Good for her! She hinted she might ask you to do me a new pair."

"Yes, she did. And as soon as lunch was over I came out into the garden to gather some gnitting cotton. But that's as far as I got."

"Hm," said the kangaroo, intrigued by the mystery. "That would be immediately before the party left Fuddlecumjig, wouldn't it? The cook said you all scattered as soon as the visitors left."

"That gnave! What does he know about it? And no, as a matter of fact: the party were still lingering over the lunch table when I left them. I remember that same cook was describing what dishes he could offer them if they ever called here again."

"What made you scatter then?"

"I don't know; the need just took me," declared Mrs. Gnit. Then she stopped in her tracks: the pair had given up the vain search and had just opened the gate to the street. "That's not right! I do know. Something startled me. That's why I scattered."

"What was it?"

"The sound of this gate latch! At my back. Someone was coming."

"Who was it?"

"How should I know? I tell you my back was turned. I never looked before I flew into a hundred pieces."

"How unfortunate," Mar deplored. "All we can do now is consult with the others. They may know something."

"Who, for instance?" demanded Dame Gnit suspiciously. "I was alone here. Who else could know anything?"

"Whoever opened the gate," said the kangaroo rather obviously. "But say 'advise' then. We might go to the Lord High Chigglewitz and get his advice. His word carries weight."

"You think so?" grunted Grandma, stumping along. "I'd say rather, his weight carries words." She sniffed in derision of the town elder, who was both plump and loquacious.

"I wish it did," mused Mar. "He might supply something else I've been looking for."

"What's that?" said Mrs. Gnit.

"A rhyme for 'mitten'."

"'Kitten'," snapped Grandmother.

The Shaggy Man tossed and turned. He *really* wasn't getting any sleep. And in the morning he was bleary-eyed and more sparing of speech than ever. He was glad he didn't see that pesky kangaroo again and get to remembering all over. For the nonce he dismissed the memory of what he'd done in Butterfield by telling himself as usual that now Penelope was loved plenty by one man and that ought to be enough for her—or anybody.

Anyway, there were other preoccupations. When the others got up that morning the star of their expedition, young Dorothy, had disappeared. That was a worry to drive all other thoughts from the Shaggy Man's head. What was the (possible) sorrow of a girl far away in Kansas compared to the (possible) danger of a girl far away from Kansas but close to his heart? Shag left his fellow travelers without even thinking of breakfast and spent the day beating the bushes in the vicinity of their camp.

To no avail. He and the soldier were gathering firewood that evening when Dorothy wandered in nonchalantly. The Shaggy Man's heart was too full. All he could say was "You've been playing hide and seek all day." After that he was silent.

Next day was better. Shag took a modest part in conversation as before, making a single comment as they tried to find the road to Rigmarole, and remarking again afterwards as they left it. But in the further adventures of the tourist party he was just one of the crowd.

Nor did he play any heroic part in the defense of his new home city, the Emerald, against the incursion of the Nome King and his cohorts. Indeed, he played no part at all, merely turning up with the others that dawn when the invading hordes were expected to devastate Oz.

It was the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman who took the lead in resisting the invaders. However, after they had got the Nome King safely into the Forbidden Fountain of Forgetfulness, Shag did reach over abstractedly and pull him out when the malefactor had swallowed sufficiently to forget his evil

enterprise. Afterwards the Shaggy Man uttered the platitudes "I think it's a finer thing to have made them into better people than to have saved Oz."

That was his last word on the subject and his last for that adventure. But as it happened *his* (own, private) adventures were only (re)beginning. Queen Ozma, at Glinda's palace, had just said Thanks to the sorceress for all she'd done (i.e., made Oz invisible and thus unreachable by enemies from the outside world) when the Shaggy Man came to her, hat in hand, and asked for an interview.

"Of course, Shaggy," answered she. Ozma took Glinda's hand again. "May we use your laboratory—or some other room apart? The Shaggy Man and I want to have conference."

Glinda said "Of course" also and sent the Minute Maid to set chairs and a table, complete with snacks and a carafe of lacasa (the house drink at the Pink Palace), in a cozy corner of her Scarlet Salon. From there they had a view beyond the crimson drapes of the long reflecting pools and ruby-sparkling fountains (so different from that which had saved the fate of Oz yesterday).

The Shaggy Man was silent and Ozma, after filling his glass, looked at him quizzically.

Then he got it out. "I thought I better speak to you right away, your highness," he began formally. "Now, before they lower this veil of invisibility over Oz—"

"'After', you mean," said Ozma with a smile. "As I understand from our dear Sorceress just now, the veil has already descended."

"Oh, gosh." The Shaggy Man rolled his eyes, minstrel-show-fashion. "Couldn't they—she—well, you—lift a flap of it, just for a minute, so I could get out?"

"'Out', Shaggy? You mean you want to leave Oz?" Ozma was incredulous."

"Not 'leave' exactly. Just 'leave of absence' as you might say. I've got some unfinished business..."

The princess could tell by the man's solemn air that this was no light affair. But now, in the afterglow of the successful settling of the Nome King's hash (she allowed herself, in light-hearted

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vein, to think that expression), she wanted to keep all things merry and bright, not be staid and sober again for just a while. Still, she could not ignore the man's earnestness. "Tell me about it, do."

"It was during our sight-seeing tour—you know?" began the man from Colorado. "We met this kangaroo. It was quite a creature, crouching by a corral, crying copiously—"

"Was that the Crazy Kangaroo of Oz?" enquired the Girl ruler, still longing for that light turn to the conversation.

"I don't know," admitted Shag, surprised; they had never thought to ask the kangaroo for its title. "It seemed more care-worn than crazy—"

"Wait a moment. I'll look in my bestiary." The queen felt in her left skirt pocket and drew out a little book. "I have it always by me. So useful, you understand, for someone who's constantly meeting people in her representative function and must remember faces and *names*."

She leafed quickly: "Ardent Aardvark, Arrogant Ape, Avid Alligator, Arrant Anteater, Brilliant Butterfly—I'd like to meet her!—or him—Baffled Buffalo, Brazen Bison, Busy Buzzard, Blue Bear—he lives in the Emerald City; at least his skin—Cautious Cougar, Comfortable Camel, Cowardly... Lion (that's not very alliterative, is it?), Crafty Kestrel, Conceited Kitten—that'll be Dorothy's pet, I'll wager—oh, good heavens!" Ozma broke off, experiencing a sudden pang. She looked up at the Shaggy Man, suddenly as grave as he, and flung the book aside.

"Dorothy's white kitten," she breathed. "How awful! I thought Glinda would have got in everyone we wanted before this happened—I mean the veil of invisibility. Dorothy will be heart-broken if she's never to see her kitten again."

The Shaggy Man felt a pang of jealousy, hearing how another stood so close in affection to the little companion of his latter-day adventures. But then he breathed easier again, recalling how Dorothy had never mentioned, in his hearing, during the whole month of her latest and final return to Oz, the pet she must have left behind in Kansas. Maybe that devotion wasn't so great after all.

"I didn't find any kangaroo, crazy or otherwise," finished off Ozma in reference to the bestiary. "It must be rather an obscure animal who's never been presented at court. But you were saying...?"

"That crying kangaroo reminded me sharply of my own time in Australia. Dorothy — and her uncle don't know this but I've been there too. In fact but that's a different story —" The man broke off as if a little confused. "Anyway, it led me in my thoughts to someone I once did a great injustice to —"

"You, Shaggy? I didn't think you could ever be unjust," said the little queen almost reproachfully.

"I'm afraid so. You know, ma'am, I wasn't any model of virtue before I was so lucky as to come to Oz. It was only here that I found how really wonderful life could be. I wanted to stay — but you yourself declared that I would only be allowed to if I 'proved to be honest and true.' Since then I've been practicing hard and I think I have managed to be — just a little honester and truer..."

"I never doubted," said Ozma loyally. "But what is your problem then?"

"It's no good just *starting* to be honest and true at the age of sixty. What about all the dishonesty of many wasted years, if the effects of it linger on? Can I live with that?"

"Why, Shaggy!" cried Ozma all aglow. "You've developed a conscience! Your strivings to be true have paid off." (Ozma did sometimes allow herself a colloquialism.) "I'm so pleased... And a fully functional conscience is all one needs."

"Not for me, your highness," demurred Shag. "Maybe my conscience is too 'fully functional'. It hurts. And if there's something I can do about it, I want to."

"Why does your conscience hurt?" asked the queen. But she was already beginning to have a shrewd idea.

"I stole something once. And then I lied about it as well. It was the Love Magnet. I know Penelope must have been broken-hearted when I took it but I kidded myself that she already had enough people loving her. Then I lied about it, right here in Oz! I said she married and was happy again. What a lie! How could I know

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anything about that? I never hung around Butterfield after my theft. Naturally I lit out of town... She may be a lonely old maid now, for all I know."

"Oh dear, that *is* sad." Princess Ozma had now definitely given up the attempt to keep this a light frothy talk. "And you've been living a lie all this time. No wonder you couldn't be really content."

"Oh, but I was!" countered the Shaggy Man. "I was perfectly content, but for one thing, before I came to Oz. Maybe it's your fault, ma'am." Shag now took a turn at being wryly humorous. "But for you I wouldn't have developed this pesky conscience that's now spoiling everything!"

"What do you want to do then?" went on Ozma, now feeling surer and surer.

"Have back the Love Magnet; and return it—or anyway offer it—to its rightful owner."

The little queen looked grave. "The magnet has always been your property, to have—or borrow back, Shaggy Man. Remember, we only accepted it when you wanted so emphatically to get rid of it."

"That was my new-hatched conscience, crowing already, your highness," said Shag ruefully. "But now—if I may..."

"Of course. As soon as we're back at the capital. And then I suppose you'll be off to Butterfield?"

"If it can be managed at all, your grace."

"I'll speak to Glinda."