

“Oh, by the way,” said the curious kangaroo to a bystander at the Baroquean border, “which is the way to the nest of Madame Jacqueline the Jackdaw?”

“Madam Jac—I’m not sure I know who you mean,” demurred the Baroquean.

Mar looked a question. “But, dear me, she’s famous,” she protested. “I mean: even I have heard of her, away in the south—and that’s going some, because I miss plenty, living the sheltered life I’ve done—up ‘til now.”

“Jackdaw?” put in a female local who had overheard. “Why, sure. That must be old Jackie. She stole a china clothes-pin of mine right off the line! She’s notorious around here. Still, I’m surprised they’ve heard of her... in the South, you say?”

“Well, actually,” confessed the kangaroo, “it *was* some Munchkins who mentioned her there—when I was enquiring how to get in touch with the tribe of jackdaws generally.”

“Jackie’ll tell you that!” assured the buxom housewife. “She’s a great old gossip. She picks up as much news as she does knickknacks on her flying raids. So they say. I’ve never had the ‘pleasure’ of her acquaintance.” Even so, the woman knew how to direct the kangaroo in her search and the latter leapt away.

As she moved on northeast over the blue fairly-forested landscape, the marsupial was able to confirm that the thieving bird was indeed widely known, at least in that part of the world. By questions to passers-by she found her way without much trouble to the big chestnut tree where Jackie nested.

“You’ve lost a flock of jackdaws?” Madame Jacqueline called down. “Don’t look at me. I only collect inanimate things—and then mostly just one of a kind. There’s no room for more in my nest, don’t you see?”

“I didn’t say I’d lost them,” protested the kangaroo. “I just said I wanted to find them.”

“Well, you don’t hunt for things unless you’ve first lost them, do you?” squawked the little crow, starting on a Lewis Carroll-

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type quibble. But she was too intelligent and honest to let a fallacy stand, and she went on: "Of course you do—f you've never had them to start with... *Where* did you say you'd lost them?"

"I didn't!" pouted the other. "I never even saw them. But some other people did, and told me about them—and about you. They said you'd know where to find them."

"Hmm, 'flock of jackdaws', you say. Odd. Jackdaws don't usually run in 'flocks'. We mostly haunt church towers, you know, and there's not often room in such for 'flocks'. Incidentally, church towers themselves are not thick on the ground in Oz. You're sure they were local daws?"

"I didn't say that. I only said my friends saw a flock of jackdaws pass over—and thought one of them might have made off with something I want."

"Well, it wasn't me," declared Jackie roundly. "I hunt strictly alone."

"Of course not! I *said* it was one of a flock. Do you know of any jackdaw flocks?"

"Not in Oz," pronounced the daw definitely.

"Okay, *not* in Oz," huffed Mar. "But anywhere?"

"Obviously," huffed Jacqueline in return. "Those notorious creatures across the desert. Everybody knows about them."

"I don't! I told you I've lived out off. Tell me about them," Mar called up, with cricked neck, to her interlocutor on high.

"Oh, it's just a gang of about eight or ten, who stage raids together. I've heard they live in an enormous communal nest on a cliff-side somewhere over there—"

Mar didn't see Jackie's casual wing gesture and she said, "Over where?"

"Across the Shifting Sands—in the land of the Rampies, I guess it is. Not so far beyond the end of the desert, apparently. I don't know; I've never been."

"How do I get there?" demanded the querulous kangaroo and pulled her pocket notebook from her pouch.

"On your legs, I guess," said Jackie annoyingly. "Oh, I see

what you mean," she relented. "Well, you couldn't do better than to leap on eastward well, southeast 'til you strike the yellow brick road. That leads on eventually to wind up at the Munchkin Gate. Through that it's further southeastering. Mind you don't burn your feet. It's hot on those sands, they say. And then well, after a while there you are, once you're off the desert."

That seemed to figure. The Winkie Fuddle-fixers who had originally told of sighting the flock had said they seemed to be flying east.

"Thanks—a *lot*," Mar said to Madame Jackie, combining sarcasm with real gratitude, and pushed off.

"Hot'?" she mulled, as she hopped along. "Burn one's feet'?" And she glanced down at her powerfully pounding paws. "And I've been worrying about my hands!" These she looked at more carefully as she bounded along. "They *don't* seem awfully burnt," she had to admit, and this though she found it impossible to keep her forepaws tucked under her arms as she leapt. "Still, they're not as soft and dainty any more—as a lady's ought to be. Mother said you could always tell a lady by her hands." And Mar took fresh resolve to get a new pair of protective mittens as soon as she possibly could.

Her journey was uneventful. She passed through one or two of the kookie countries that lie along that road but generally tried to avoid running into people or colliding with Kalidahs—that might hold her up. Her business was not with these.

Mar arrived at the Dorothy's House National Monument one evening early and would have liked to go in and have a look at the historic place. It reminded her of her own house, and she sent a thought to distant Tronch and Melix—or was it Plonto and Zeluel? Heavens, she wasn't forgetting her own children's names? But she had always found the names difficult; they had been her husband Pea's idea—as had the children themselves.

But the monument door was looked. 'That's right,' remembered the animal. 'It says in the hagiography that Dorothy locked the door and put the key in her pocket when she left the

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house. And nobody's been in it since.<sup>§</sup>

Mar slept in the Munchkin custodians' tool shed (*not* looked, of course, in trusting Munchkinland) and went on her way in the morning.

As indicated, the Road led straight to the imposing granite Munchkin Gate at the outer eastern confines of the fairy kingdom. The civilized and tidy Munchkins had long ago planted, and still faithfully tended, a thick (and by now inordinately tall) hedge of privet and box (charming peppery smell!) all along the exact perimeter of their country, shutting out the view of the forbidding region beyond. Thus Mar was unsuspecting of what lay on the other Side as she pushed aside the swing wings of the gate and bounded through.

And instantly vanished.

At least: she didn't vanish to herself, of course. She could still make out her every limb as she jounced along—with quickly diminishing momentum. She merely couldn't be seen by anyone around. But as there *wasn't* anyone around, there on the trackless wastes of the Shifting Sands, Mar didn't find out that circumstance for a while—if ever.

What disconcerted her was that she couldn't see anything other than herself. She was enveloped in a world of total invisibility. It was as if she were adrift in a colorless transparent universe with simply total nothing to be seen in any direction. *Extremely* disorienting. But she was saved from complete panic by the reassuring feel of too, too solid earth beneath her feet. That told her she was *somewhere*, not simply lost in utter limbo.

The confounded kangaroo rested back on her tail and considered. Unfortunately she had not stopped soon enough and after really only minimal shifting to one side or another to try to catch a glimpse of a landmark she had completely lost all sense of direction. Now of course she would try to leap back the way she had come and hope to blunder sight unseen into the border hedge and that would guide her. But somehow already she sensed that

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§ But that would change quite soon. See *Uncle Henry & Aunt Em in Oz*.

that ploy was not going to work. What could she, as a reasonable creature, do now?

Well, she could cry. So she did that for a while. It was refreshing and at the same time rinsed her eyes of travel dust. But in the long run it was not productive. She could panic, but Mar didn't really enjoy panicking, so she refrained. The only other possibility seemed to be to hop on until she came to something that might offer some kind of solution.

At first she thought of starving to death but that soon proved impracticable. Her sensitive nose told her where sagebrush and tumbleweeds grew in stable clefts among the sand dunes and they proved as pleasing to her palate as her native gum-tree leaves.

So the courageous kangaroo hopped. She just hopped and hopped. Then she hopped some more. Sometimes she lay down and slept. Then she hopped further. She continued to hop. She hopped continuously. After that she hopped. She was by no means hopeless.

Then one day (she had no idea what day — or after how many) she saw something. It was Professor Wogglebug of Oz.

“Nitten?!” said Prof. Wogglebug. “Nitten nye kvindelige elever! Er du sikker—” Then he broke off and blushed brown, remembering where he was.

Where he was was in front of his little class in Danish and he had been in the middle of a lively exposition of Syntagmatic Patterning in Stød—in the original, of course; this was his very advanced group—when the message came.

“Nineteen?” he started over. “Did you say nineteen new co-eds?”

“Yes, sir,” said Fex. “At least, I’m pretty sure that’s what they want. They were all talking at once, you see, and I couldn’t be quite certain but I caught the words ‘study’ and ‘classes’ several times. And then I heard one of them say your name—so I brought them to you.”

“Where are they?”

“Downstairs in the hall. If you would just have a word with them,” the young registrar’s-assistant essayed, “that is: if you can *get just a word*.” The youth liked a bit of a pleasantry.

The wogglebug flew downstairs. Literally. After all, nineteen pretty (well, it stood to reason they were *pretty*) girls should not be kept waiting. His expectation was not deceived. There milled the bevy, and they *were* pretty. Oddly, they all looked alike; they also all looked like Polychrome, his ex-pupil.

At once the professor knew where he was. Deftly he took control. “Ladies!!... My dear young ladies! Silence, I beseech you. I shall speak, and when I have spoken I shall ask *one* of you to reply.

“Now then: I recognise you—with delight, I should say—as sibilings of our late student—and, I might add, dear friend—Miss Polychrome Rainbowsdaughter. She often spoke of her charming sisters—although I did not fully grasp that the number of you ran to nineteen. I think my colleague, Mr. Fex, mentioned nineteen—” That was as far as he got. The excited girls broke in, though anyway one at a time for greater intelligibility.

“Of course nineteen!” cried Aurora.

"How many did you think?: eighteen?" put in Iris saucily.

"Or maybe just twelve?" wondered Vattenande.

"Never mind that! State our business," perempted Prism.

"It's our sister!" hastily supplied Opal.

"Polychrome," inserted Raduga, just to be sure.

"Yes; where is she?" said Arcenciel, who liked asking leading questions.

"Dad's frantic," declared Tien Kang.

"He can't think where she's got to," stated Naiad.

"Of course he knows she set out to get a college education—" began Alouette, but Pluvia broke in:

"All of us know that!"

"Admittedly, she never said for how long," confessed Curcubeu.

"—she'd be gone, that is," supplemented Sateenkaari.

"But she acted like it was just going to be a few days," informed Regenvlaag.

"Or anyway no more than a couple of weeks," added Aquarelle.

"But now it's been four months!" indicted Lucy, getting to the heart of the matter.

"Actually, longer than that," corrected Farvespil.

"More like five months by now," constated Arcobaleno.

"Yes, and we're all worried sick," summed up Roong, who preferred to be last.

"I see," intoned the Dean and looked wise. "Yes indeed, certainly you have cause to be concerned. But I'm incredulous! You mean Polychrome never wrote in all the months she was with us?" But then, clapping his feeler to his forehead, "Of course! How stupid of me! There's no mail delivery on the rainbow."

"Anyway we can't read," stated Naiad bluntly.

"But how perfectly awful!" cried the professor in real distress. "I can see you, all of you, would be distraught. Here, Fex! run at once to the cafeteria and bring a tray of refreshments."

"Yes, sir!"

"No, better make that 'trays'! You girls will want something

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strengthening... Let's go into the common room. Oh, and Fez—" he called after the hurrying office-boy— "send word up to my class they're dismissed. *You* come right back."

"Yes, *sir!*" assured Fex and hastened off. He had no intention of remaining long away from the company of nineteen carbon copies of the girl of his dreams.

The professor too was still struck by the likeness of all the girls and as they tripped along after him he enquired of Vattenande— or, no, was it Regenvlaag?:

"Are you girls vigintuplets?"

The rainbow maiden looked a question but she didn't like to articulate her ignorance before a professor.

"I mean:" inserted the wogglebug, "were all of you born at the same time... all twenty at once? You're so very much alike."

"Oh, no," assured Regenvlaag. "All at different times. But we all have the same father and mother. Maybe that accounts for it."

The dean smiled to himself. "It surely has *something* to do with it." Then he made conversation about the girls' parents and expressed again (as he had on occasion to Polyohrome herself) his wonderment that the offspring of Mother Earth and Daddy Rainbow should appear to have the form of human beings.

"Oh, that's only to human beings, of course," informed the girl. "I think I'm right in saying that. I've never met any human beings before today— and yet it seems I'm able to talk your language. But when happy little bluebirds fly beyond the rainbow, why, we can talk to them as readily. I guess we appear as bluebirds to bluebirds!"

"Yes, and as storks to storks—and vultures to vultures," put in Opal, who had eavesdropped, and who happened to recall conversations with members of those two species.

These fascinating speculations absorbed the professor and those nearest him until they were seated in the common room. Then Fex—and President Nowitall, who had been borrowing paper-clips when the sub-registrar checked in at the office for a moment—entered with the trays of turkey sandwiches (a favorite of Polychrome's) and—but let Fex tell it:



“There were no dewdrops left, ladies, after the cloudburst that announced your arrival. But I’ve brought cups of fresh raindrops and I hope they’ll ‘dew’.” He waited for the acknowledging laugh but only Arcenciel caught the pun. That was enough, however, to encourage Fxx to sit down next to her and presently to dare to hold her hand.

“I’m sorry there were no cloud-cakes,” diffided Professor Nowitall. “I trust these feather-wafers will serve instead. They’re the cook’s speciality.”

When all had been served, Aurora, appointing herself spokeswoman, pursued: “Father Rainbow has given us just one day in which to find out what’s become of our sister. Please, Professor, relieve our suspense. We feel sure that nothing *bad*—”

“Oh, perish the thought, my dear!” cried Wogglebug in consternation. “We all of us at R.A.C. adore your sister. None would allow a hair of her head...” The prof ran through a litany of reassurances and then told the rainbow girls what had happened. Polychrome had gone on to do postgraduate studies with the learned Wizard Wam. If she hadn’t reported back to the rainbow yet, why, that simply meant...

The maidens got to their feet, six or seven with regret, because this was the first earthly luncheon party they had ever been to and they were enjoying the treat.

“We must be off with all haste to this Mr. Wam,” declared Aurora. “Professor, will you provide his address?”

“Oh, dear ladies,” cried the wogglebug in distress, “please sit down, I entreat you—and finish your refreshments.” Eight or nine at once did so. “The wizard isn’t resident here locally! He lives right across the country, at least a full day’s journey from here, maybe two. I don’t see how—”

He broke off when, to his dismay, he saw Aurora burst into tears. “We’ve failed!” she wailed. “Dad’s going to be terribly upset. We were hoping so desperately to make good. It might have been the start, don’t you see?, of being allowed off the rainbow often. It’s all been such fun but now we’ll never...” She broke down completely.

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A group of her sisters condoled with her while the rest looked at the Ozite reproachfully. Arcenciel pointedly withdrew her hand from Fex's. Sateenkaari said, "If only *we* had some magic! As it is, we couldn't get there in time, *walking*, even if we are fairies."

And Farvespil said, "Whatever are we going to do?"

Professor Wogglebug rose to the occasion. "It's true, I fear. Even on your light fairy feet you couldn't get to Wizard Wam's place while it's still light and after dark—"

"No rainbows!" mourned Prism and she too began to weep.

"Return to your rainbow, my dear girls," urged the bug, "—after you've finished your collation—"

"Quite a while after," interrupted Iris. "Dad's sending a small shower at five o'clock to pick us up."

"Oh, well; fine. Meanwhile young Fex here will give you a guided tour of the campus—"

"Yes, sir," agreed the youth.

"—while I myself *fly* to Wam's and ascertain—"

"Oh, professor, *would* you?" Aurora lifted a lovely tear-stained face, now beaming like the dawn.

"Neither will I be able to be back before late tomorrow or next day. But shall we say?: on the third day hence, if the Lord of the Rainbow cares to arrange for a small downpour, I'll have definite word of your Polychrome. With any luck, the errant lady herself..."

So it was decided, and the party broke up amid general gratification. The wogglebug lost no time in launching himself into space. He had merely to change his tail-coat and breeches for his flying togs and away he wafted and was soon out of sight, to the waving of nineteen handkerchiefs.

He struck a favorable tail-wind and was carried over blue forests and a few fields until just at dark he was able to make out the great opaque shape of the inflatable barn-hostel on the property of the Wizard Wam. It loomed impressively, even from a height, against the lighter dark of the grassy ground.

"Miss Polychrome?" gasped the wizard at his door, following the academic's polite knock. "Oh, gosh you've missed her. You mean she didn't let anyone know?" he went on— with quite a bit

of hypocrisy. “Well, what a shame. The naughty young woman. Why yes, she did splendidly in her studies with me, and then she went on to the Witoh of the North to see what she had to contribute... Oh, let’s see, that would be about two weeks ago now. But, please, my dear Professor, I’m forgetting my manners. Do step in...”

The upshot of the invitation was that Wogglebug who was not that much of a specialist at night-flying spent the dark hours at Wam’s and was off at first light.

Over hill and purple dale he flew and then he came down at the location Wam had indicated: the clearing in the brooding violet forest before the hut-studio of Tattypoo, good witch of the North. A moment before landing he glimpsed a dragon in the back garden so, after ringing at the front door and getting no response, the insect strolled around that way.

It was Agnes, Tattypoo’s familiar, and in her rubber gloves she was hanging up the wash. “Good day,” spoke the wogglebug, and Agnes with a start turned and responded in kind.

“I seek the good witch Tattypoo,” said the professor. “I hope she is not from home.”

“Well, there,” said the dragon, “I’m afraid she *is* from home. Something came up—what was it now? Anyway, she had to go consult the witch-queen, Zixi of Ix—oh, the better part of a week ago. I’m expecting her home any day now—”

“Any *day!* Oh, gracious,” whirred the bug, “I’m afraid I haven’t got ‘days’. I’ll have to go after her. Queen Zixi, you say? Yes, I know the way. Thank you so much. I won’t keep you.” And the professor moved to an open space between toadstool beds and in a twinkling lifted off into the purple. Agnes scratched her head and looked after him, wondering what that was all about.

It is unfortunate that the wogglebug was so precipitate, not staying to enquire if the witch had a companion on the occasion of her departure. Instead, he hummed to himself as he flew away: “So: Polychrome in getting the full treatment. First studies with Wam, and then with the Northern witch, and now Zixi to boot. She’s going to have the whole spectrum of magic before she’s done.

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The whole of *witch* magic, that is... Hmm." He was pensive for a bit. 'But being after all a fairy,' he pondered, 'oughtn't she to be assimilating some *fairy* magic?!

Ix lay more or less straight north so Wogglebug plotted his course via the marble Gillikin Gate. After three hours of steady flight he came down over the mountains and sighted the structure. There was, however, no reason to land, so he flew right over it and on. It seemed to him the desert beyond looked strangely white and featureless but he thought nothing of it at the time. Though a professor, the insect could be absent-minded occasionally and now it had quite slipped his mind that Glinda and Ozma in concert had made certain rearrangements affecting the territory beyond the confines of Oz.

The result was that he continued to fly. After what seemed a very long time he thought he ought to be getting over land beyond the desert. The unvarying sun-bleached whiteness of the sky and the undifferentiated blank surface of the so-called Impassable Desert were proving disorienting. From the feel of his wing tendons maybe this desert *was* impassable. He decided to land and reconnoitre.

But where was the land? He felt morally certain there was earth down below, and the force of gravity, the tensions of body muscles, his sense of equilibrium and a light headache when he flew for any length of time upside-down—informed the bug of where "below" was. But he didn't want to risk a crash landing. He spread his wings wide and coasted in an ever so gradual descent.

Well thought upon—and managed. Before long the bug lay with knees and chin in soft sand. Sand?! He sat up with a start. He felt about with three or four chelae. It was a very powdery sand, more like dust. Maybe that helped to make the desert impassable, for walkers.

But he ought not still to be in the desert! By now he must have flown many miles beyond the reach an of that. Anyway it now came to him that, no matter where he was, it was invisible. He could not see the sand-dust he rubbed between his feelers. He might well be in some *other*, isolated, dust-desert,

in Ix, or wherever...

The memory of what Oz's rulers had planned for circumventing future invasions of their country came back to him with awful and complete clarity.

Great Isosceles! what was he to do now?

The good wogglebug panicked just a little. His arduous flight(s) had fatigued him, he felt ravenously thirsty, and he could do with a bite to eat as well. It came to him that to lift himself into the air again could avail nothing: nothing more than the last four or five hours' flying had availed, and that was zilch. He would in short order merely exhaust himself.

After a little quiet desperation he lay still. Going mad wasn't going to help. Good sense came to his rescue. First, if he could forget the tortures of thirst and hunger, he would sleep. That in itself would contribute materially to renewing his forces. After that he would see maybe only figuratively, but just the same...

As planned, so done. After the sleep the bug set off crawling (to conserve his strength). He crawled slowly and methodically. He crawled unagitatedly. He crawled a long time—in as straight a line as total directionlessness would allow. He crawled and crawled. Presently he came upon something on the dusty ground that felt (uncomfortably) like cactus. The well-read academic knew how in a pinch cactus could provide both meat and drink for a desperate traveler. He circumvented the spines as best he could and had a lengthy chew. Afterwards he crawled on, somewhat restored. He crawled longingly. He crawled exceedingly. He crawled at last desperately.

And all this while he saw nothing (except himself and portions thereof), except once or twice, incredibly, when he fancied he caught sight of a bird flying over. He crawled through invisibility, now fearing seriously for his sanity. He was hallucinating! Birds yet! where all else was void. He crawled more; his strength grew less, he now hallucinated badly, because he thought he saw—a kangaroo!

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

The white cat purred.

This really was rather nice. Could you blame her for not leaving it all behind? The comfortable quarters, the regular meals, the freedom from onerous duties, the almost obsequious cordiality of the old woman? Admittedly the latter was a fright to look at but Eureka firmly believed that handsome was as handsome did. She opened one eye.

It was early yet but the hag was brandishing with that broom again. Where did all the dust (and sometimes ashes) come from? It seemed to be connected with the operations that at times went on behind locked doors in the strange-looking scullery off the kitchen. Eureka had more than once of a morning noticed unaccounted-for heaps of residue in the kitchen fireplace as well.

Well, she wouldn't disturb the woman at those labors. Eureka went back to sleep, idly wondering what was afoot. She had discovered that Miss Gulch was quite house-proud: spent rather a lot of time in tidying and beautifying. But today's excesses in that direction seemed—well, excessive.

Such would be less inexplicable if the woman ever had visitors in to see the display of pristinity, but she did not. Eureka began to understand her own welcome more. The old hag must be perishing of loneliness. Never mind: Eureka didn't mind offering a little companionability now and then. All the more off-putting then that: she was locked out of the transactions that went on in the scullery. But, for a cat, Eureka was fairly incurious and she did not pry.

Still, it *was* mysterious what that stuff in the fireplace might be. Eureka had poked it with a tentative paw. Animal?; it didn't smell like it. Vegetable?; it didn't taste like it. Mineral?; it didn't feel like it. She dabbed at it again. How queer. It seemed to shift slightly—but sort of all-in-one-piece. She took the other paw to it. *didn't* it move just a wee bit? Yes, decidedly. The mass was moving, very faintly, on its own!

This would never do. Something alive in the fireplace? As self-

appointed custodian of whatever vermin might infest the premises, Eureka could not allow anything to reside undisturbed in the fireplace. She patted the emerging blob with one paw and then the other.

The glob of whatever it was now definitely self-adhered in one large soft shape. The cat grew fascinated. Was this what the old woman had been working on; now belatedly taking shape, becoming an apport of some sort? A viable entity (though Eureka's vocabulary perhaps scarcely went so far as to be able to describe it in those terms)?

This was fun! The more the cat patted the shape the more it metamorphosed. The indeterminate color of what had started out an brown-grey-whitish ashes (as she supposed one must call them, though the mass had all along seemed more plastic than ash) was now coalescing into definite spots of color. There was a greyish-blue patch, there a clear white, and — what? — was that a glimpse of her favorite pink? She must be dreaming.

The idle pastime became a sport. The patting became a batting. The harder she hit the quicker the thing changed. It was rising up! Each blow sent it higher, and as it extended upwards it shrank in laterally. Now the blob was definitely taller than wide, sitting there on the tiles four-square.

"Sitting?" Suddenly the sport became a frenzy. Filled with a fantastic boding the cat batted the amorphous shape furiously, and with each blow the premonition became more of a certainty. In a magically short time the gleaming form of the life-size pug sat there on the now clean-swept-appearing hearth.

Eureka crouched, each hair erect. The bulging blue eyes of the pug seemed to collect themselves from distant space, move, and come to rest on the cat. The mouth opened wide in a great yawn. And then in a high squeaky lah-di-dah voice the pug dog said:

*"Comme tu m'as bien battu, mon coeur!"*

"Oh, lord, a Frenchy," sighed the cat in an exasperated growl.

"Of course French," said the pug disdainfully. "What else? One is careful about one's antecedents."

Eureka sighed again — in relief. "But you speak English any-

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way. That's something."

"It's a useful tool, so one acquires it—nothing more. Everyone has talked it around me for longer than I can remember."

With infinite caution the dog-shape was relaxing from its upright stance and subsiding down to lie full-out on the hearth tiles. "Oh, now *there's* relief," it exhaled squeakily. "I've been sitting up correct and proper for seventy years that I know of. How I've *longed* to lie down." Slowly, as if with an effort, the figure closed one eyelid at Eureka. "Viens! Couche-toi auprès de moi."

Eureka had small Latin and less French but she understood well enough what the pug meant. She took a step forward

Wham! A door slammed and the cat woke up. One leap and she was at the top of the attic stairs. Two more and she was at the bottom. She hightailed it toward the kitchen. Damn! the grocery boy had been in and she had missed him. The visit of the grocer's cart was the event of the week. How had she been so stupid as to have overslept?

Just so: there was old Miss Gulch with both arms loaded, staggering to the big deal table. Eureka went to help. This consisted of leaping onto the rocking chair and being careful not to set it tilting while she put one paw up tentatively on the table edge. Even so favored an inmate of the house as Eureka knew the actual table top was off limits for promenades.

Now began the delightful ceremony of the distribution of provisions. Some dull things in prepackaged sacks and tins were placed on cupboard shelves. A hink of something that sloshed delightfully (Eureka had learned that this was the source of the curds and whey) was stowed in the coolness of the little cellar. Other matters loosely wrapped in parchment paper were left 'til last.

These were what drew the cat. Already she was purring in anticipation. The temptation was awful. Eureka looked round. Where *was* the woman? She'd better get back directly or Eureka would not be responsible. Her roving eye caught two things. The black hole of the kitchen fireplace looked strangely—what?—tidily brushed and neat but—empty. Now what did that...? The other thing was a book lying open on the work-table. Cabalistic



formulas, no doubt, sniffed the cat, then, paused to glance again. No! it was a cookbook. What on earth! Miss Gulch never cooked by recipes. Whatever was going on? And all this house-cleaning from the dawn on. Something was afoot.

Miss puss was not left long in ignorance. Miss Gulch came briskly into the room, rubbing her hands down her apron. She said, "I'm running late! My nephew's coming to lunch. Now stand out of the way like a good cat. I must make the fat fly."

She jerked open the paper wrappings and revealed the pile of liver, the pound of butter, the half-flitch of bacon which the cat's soul had already divined.

What did she say?: a nephew coming to lunch? At Miss Gulch's, who never served lunches or had visitors? Great day! The world was turned upsidedown.

The woman talked on. Another excuse for one's keeping a cat was to be able to talk aloud to oneself under the pretense of having an auditor. "Yes, I had a letter." (That in itself was enough of an event, but it was true: Eureka herself had noticed the mail-man hovering in the road one day lately.) "He's passing through K.C. and said he could give me an afternoon. Gracious—it's been years! Since before I retired. He's never seen me in this house. I wonder what he'll think. Hmmm, I'd better keep mum about my—'experiments'... He's a poet! but I never knew of such having money to travel about. Maybe that's it: he thinks a timely visit here might do to insure an inheritance from me..." The woman cackled very like a beldam. "Still, he used to be a nice boy. We'll see."

Some butter was put to frizzle in a pan on the range, as the woman cut thin slices from the liver. One such, three inches long, she waved, unwisely, before the nose of the cat. "There *may* be something for you—afterwards." Eureka found this behavior too familiar, even if she herself *was* regarded as a familiar.

Eight fine strips were cut from the end of the bacon before Miss Gulch hung it by its string from a ceiling hook. The cat looked aloft and pondered whether a leap in the dark of night would avail anything. Miss Gulch smeared with the knife end a minus-

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cule dab of butter on the oilcloth cover within reach of Eureka's tongue, before laying the loaf of it aside for ultimate deposition in the ice chest. This was cruel and infelicitous treatment, snarled the cat inwardly as she condescended to lick the cloth. Outwardly the snarl emerged as a rather staccato purr.

Afterwards the beldam's attention was elsewhere as she blended ingredients and bent to place a casserole dish in the Dutch-oven. To remind her mistress of her at all, Eureka had to drop to the floor and sashay before her, stretching herself out with claws extended and rump high. Even then it resulted only in an insufficient lump of the congealed clabber being fetched from the can in the pool-cellar and slopped indifferently upon a saucer on the hearth. The old witch was trying to incite her, Eureka'd be bound! Still, she pretended to be gratified and purred loudly.

A heavenly aroma came from the oven. Some of the ingredients of the dish had still not been rewrapped and stowed in their appointed places when a loud rasping tinkle broke the near-silence of the room. Miss Gulch gave a brief scream. "Belles of Blocksberg! That'll never be Ted! He's ages too early."

She gave her hand a hasty fumble in her apron, smoothed her hair with too-liverish fingers, and left the kitchen. The explanations at the door took too long: an earlier train, a walk that did not take as much time as expected, the need to curtail the visit at its other end. "But look at this, Aunt Almira: my volume of verse just off the press. You're the first to get a copy!"... All this took valuable time, time that could not be afforded.

For when the couple entered the kitchen for the hostess to check on lunch, they came too late. Too late! Those sad, sad words.

The table top was a shambles. No one noticed the white tail quickly disappearing past the screen door, in the horror of discovery of buttered foot prints everywhere together with remainders of liver in the form of trifling serape and shreds where they had been abandoned as well and truly chewed.

"That cat!" shrieked Miss Gulch and was nigh to fainting. Hastily Ted pumped a glass of water at the sink and gave her to drink where she sat, collapsed, in the rocking chair. "Oh, I should have

known! Taking in a stray that way. They can never be trusted. I've warned that animal off the table a hundred times. I thought she'd learned—"

"A cat, Aunt Almira?" Ted tried to calm her with an approach from another angle. "That's new."

"Well, I wanted something living around the place. The chickens are no company. Then this creature showed up, meowing around the back door. It seemed a pretty little thing." Miss Gulch was not being quite candid. She scanted reference to an actual *need* of a cat as standard equipment in her chosen new metier. "Well, I took her on. But I never dreamed of *this*—" She went on to render a minute description of the circumstances of the crime.

Ted listened indulgently, with a little smile just invisible around his mouth. At last he summed up: "Never mind. The lunch is saved—if my nostrils mistake me not."

"Great Powers!" cried his aunt and started to her feet. "The casserole will be like a cinder!" and she darted to the oven. But it was not.

The luncheon party was a success despite the disaster. To display his powers, as well as to pass the final hour, after family gossip had died away and before his train went, Ted composed in his aunt's admiring presence this sonnet:

"A pussy cat had wakened with the day  
 But snoozed again when she remarked the chore  
 Her mistress was embarked upon in May  
 In their pink clapboard dwelling by the shore.  
 When she awoke again she found a book  
 Had now engaged the dame. It was a study  
 That she was making, starting in to cook,  
 And for those purposes her hands were bloody.  
 It was a pound of liver, there was butter,  
 And bacon strips as well that drew the cat.  
 Her interest in her mistress made her stutter.  
 Her deep devotion made her stretch quite flat.  
 Her purring deafened as she sought to sing.  
 And then, oh joy!, she heard the doorbell ring.

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

“You’ve promised, Wizard.”

“Yes, my dear, the Queen is not to know of your work—nor any of the other Adepts. And *you* have promised not to work wonders in Oz; only elsewhere, in other magic lands and perhaps in the outside world, or, if occasion requires, in the sky—or under ground.”

Polychrome uttered a bell-like peal of laughter. “‘Under ground’! It’ll be the first subterranean rainbow in history then. But, Wam, seriously: if anyone comes asking, you’ll not tell where I am? I’m so afraid if Daddy once gets me home I’ll never be able to come away again and complete my studies. And without them I’ll never feel worthy of my love.” The rainbow maiden had a disconcerting way of revealing to just about everybody her infatuation for an unsuitable itinerant earthling.

More or less in jest the wizard gave his word. Poly, if all went well, would have an intensive short course in Fairy lore at the court of the very Queen herself of all the fairies and then she would hurry home, equipped in body and mind to meet her lover on an equal footing whenever an occasion could be arranged.

Master and pupil parted in most cordial friendship and Wam teleported Miss Polychrome to the Quadling Gate of Oz. Teleportation was one of his specialties but it gave him a pang to practice it once again (*quite* illegally). It brought back memories of his lost boy, who had been his telemessenger in times gone by.<sup>§</sup>

The Rainbow’s daughter passed through the imposing red rock gate and found herself upon the spreading sands of the comparatively innocuous Great Waste. She looked around her with some interest. It was not that often that rainbows appeared on deserts. She recalled her thrilling sand-boat ride across the threatening Deadly Desert\*, but this was all so different. Here she was on her own and actually physically treading on the sands. As it happened,

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§ See *Uncle Henry & Aunt Em in Oz*.

\*See *The Road to Oz*. Editor’s notes.

Polychrome didn't know enough to be aware that, by all intentions, she oughtn't to be able to see a thing!

The recent alteration of the state of the nation had in fact not been publicly proclaimed by wonderworkers Osma and Glinda. Yet neither did they make a secret of it. They merely reasoned that people would find out all in good time through personal experience that Oz had become invisible to the outside world, and vice versa. And if people did *not* find out, what matter?

Polychrome, however, was a fairy: a very special type of fairy, a rain nymph, of which there are perhaps not so many as of common or garden-bottom fairies who teem in their myriads. Howsomever, they are all fairies and as such were not affected by a local and private enchantment such as that which had lately been evoked here. Creatures which are all along invisible in the great world to men cannot become *more* invisible. Their status remained unchanged under the conditions of the new dispensation and Polychrome could see on the desert as well as ever she had been able.

Now was the time to put to use some of what she had learned from Wam. She pronounced certain charms, made certain gestures, and in an instant was flashing faster than the speed of light over the great waste to the land beyond. Here the magic dumped her down in the thick thyme-scented verdure of a grassy dell. So far so good.

When the girl had shaken herself down from her impetuous passage through the air and taken a few dance steps to be sure she was still sound in wind and limb, she ran up a hill to spy from its summit. Yes, there on the horizon to the south were the leafy approaches to the grandest deepest forest on all the magic continent.

It stood to reason that the Queen of all the Fairies would not hold court in just any old woods: In the first place, though powerful *everywhere* she would naturally choose to make her domicile in that one area of the earth's surface generally admitted to be the most magical of all. Then, on that continent, where would she elect to live but in the secretest deep heart of the greateat region

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of protective off-warding trees to be found anywhere? Fairies had nothing to fear from anyone but just the same it was nice to be at home in one's own most secret glade where no intrusions need be expected as one spun moonbeams and wove magic cloaks and gave artisans asses' heads and so on.

Polychrome was feeling just a little anxious as she entered the precincts of the forest. What if the great Lurline were to take umbrage at a rainbow maiden's boldly coming into her presence with elaborate demands and *without* any proper introductions (other than a word-of-mouth one from a mere mortal wizard)? Still, Poly wasn't going to get all souciant about that. The queen could but send her on her way with a flea in her ear. There was no punishment for card-carrying fairies' daring to approach the ruler of them all.

As it happened, the rain maiden's careless charm and darting dancing ways were just what the somewhat jaded fairy queen could use at the moment. She and all her band were feeling blue because, since that strange expedition which ended in the invention of the later famous Woozy of Oz\*, the little pixy Dementia had retreated into a mood of abashed reclusion and no longer delighted her fairy companions with her amusing notions and naive conversation. When one is a fairy thousands of years old—if not millions—any new thing is grasped at avidly, but when that new thing's charm wears thin one is more bored even than before. As for the proper fairies themselves, Espa and Ereol and all that crowd, they had ages since done and said every new thing any of them was capable of. Polychrome's bright advent was like rain in the desert, or, in this case, forest.

"To study magic, my dear?" said Lurline from her throne on an enormous gilt-edged toadstool. "But as a bona fide fairy surely you know a deal of magic already."

"No, Your Fayship!" exclaimed Poly, aggrieved afresh at the recollection. "Daddy would never teach us a thing. What did we want with magic? he said. Our home was in the clouds and it was

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\* See *In Other Lands than Oz*. Editor's note.

never envisaged we should leave it. On the rainbow he himself could do all the magic that needed doing: creating pots of gold, for instance, to rest his feet in, and making troubles melt like lemon drops. All we girls were expected to do was dance like crazy and look lovely, so we all grow expert at those things, but that's all."

Very soon the whole intrigue had come out. Lurline looked grave when she heard about the fairy's love for a mortal but even so she said, "A conversance with magic is your birthright, my girl. It isn't proper that it's been kept from you. As for young Ozma's embargo on thaumaturgy in her own dominions, that's her affair; it's nothing to do with you. You're not a native of Oz, nor like to be, unless you marry this naturalized immigrant Ozite you speak of..."

Polychrome blushed various shades of crimson. Even in her wildest dreams—and sometimes, very occasionally, they were a *little* wild—she had never allowed herself to contemplate matrimony. She stuttered in her confusion and succeeded in saying nothing.

"Besides," went on queen Lurline, "you've already, you say, taken a vow not to practice magic within Oz, so that's all right. Why in the world shouldn't you learn the art? It will be a diversion for us to take you on as our pupil."

"Oh, Your Fayness," cried the enraptured girl, "how super!" She fell into slang in her exuberance. "I'll be ever so good and diligent. You won't regret it, I do assure you."

"That's all right, dearie," dismissed the fairy queen calmly. "I have every confidence in you. As for the studies themselves, I can implant knowledge of every breach of fairy lore in your mind with a wave of the wand, but I wonder if that's what we any of us want..."

"Oh, your fayness!" moaned all thirty-one of the fairy band at once. "Do, we pray you, not do any much thing! Where would be the fun of that?"

Polychrome herself was of two minds. It *would* be neat to grab an entire education in magic in moments and beat a hasty retreat to the realm of her father Rainbow, about whom she was getting a

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very guilty conscience. But she had had a glimpse of the amusing pastimes of the sylph society and she rationalized that it would not make her disallegiance to her dad look very much worse if she were to stay a few days among the fairy sisters. What fun it would be, practicing giving artisans asses' heads in the company of people who knew all about it. Better still, if she were to learn how to *remove* asses' heads! What an impression she could make on her dear-Shaggy Man, who a scant nine months ago had had that very problem! She decided to stay.

As for father: with all the magic implicit around her here, surely he could be sent a message by some sorcery manner: 'Don't fret; home directly.'



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

The Shabby Man was thinking of Australia. He found himself doing that a lot lately... ever since that comical kangaroo had so curiously and compellingly brought the great island to mind. Naturally he thought at the same time of Dorothy Gale. After all, it was for her sake he was making this quest—both directly and indirectly. ‘Indirectly’ because this pesky conscience that had come alive (indirectly her fault!) needed to be clear for her sake. And ‘directly’ because that evening on the street in Sydney—

Whups! another car stopping, a big black Kissel Kar. How incredible the luck had been, ever since California! But no, he reminded himself, it wasn’t incredible at all. Wasn’t he wearing the Love Magnet? It was so powerful that one glance towards its wearer by a driver made brakes slam on instantly. Afterwards people would say to each other: “Now why did we stop for that old tramp? We never do.”

For it could not be denied that after two weeks on the road without a razor (Mr. Mercer’s amiability didn’t extend that far) the once Snazzy Man’s face was going on for as shaggy as of old. After the nights in woods and box-ogre and on the salesman’s back seat, not to mention the one spent just now in a corn-crib outside Emporia, the formerly brilliant demi-Alpine outfit was one great wrinkle. Shag just hoped it wouldn’t be any worse by the time he stood in front of Miss Penelope—or Mrs. Carmichael, as he supposed she was now.

The Kissel Kar took him right to Topeka. It had been the man’s intention, before the ski-skates proved disappointing outside of Faerie, to go at once to the Topeka bank and make an enquiry respecting the cat unfortunately left behind when the Mankato-Gale ranch had been temporarily vacated some weeks before. (No point in getting involved in the legalities of who actually owned the farm now that Dorothy’s relatives had decamped forever.) But now his appearance made him hesitate and then the chance was lost. The family were heading for St. Joseph, Missouri, and so the Shabby Man stayed with them until the next crossroads.

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To walk along this road again! Who would have supposed last summer that he would be coming on a *second* quest this way within so short a time? Would it too be crowned with success? Shag felt his heart beating unaccustomedly just a little faster than he thought of the two hurdles he aspired to clear in just a little while now.

He went along the dusty road and it all came back to him like yesterday. The apparent accidental meeting at the fence before the farmhouse. The strange coincidence that Butterfield should lie so close by: a perfect handle to hang an introductory conversation on, even though Butterfield was the last place he thought of going to just then. Those apples he had stolen! Well, so it turned out, they came in handy as provender later on. But there'd be no apples in May.

How absent-minded he had appeared, stumbling over little humps in the soil as he and the girl crossed the field. If someone could have guessed what a turmoil his mind was in, someone would have been very much surprised. He almost gave himself away when he confessed that he had no intention of going to Butterfield. "Nowhere really," he had answered when the girl asked what his actual destination was. Well, he couldn't admit that he had *just reached* his real destination!

That whole adventure had been unique: the only one he knew of where the goal was reached in the first chapter, why, on the first page so that all that came after was pure anticlimax.<sup>§</sup> But later judges agreed: it was the least compelling of all Oz adventures.

There was the farmhouse now, looking not much different from how he remembered it. Not that he had given it more than a glance. He had had eyes only for something else. Even the apple tree he would not have noticed except by reason of the fact that Dorothy disappeared for a moment. The dog: that yapping appendage of the young girl had appeared at the moment of the apple theft. What did the dog care? Dogs didn't eat apples. *They* were more attracted by bedroom slippers and book bindings. To get rid of the nuisance Shag had stuffed it in his pocket among the apples,

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§ See *The Road to Oz*. Editor's note.

wishing that he might meet an amiable dog for a change. Why did they always bark so ferociously at harmless tramps?

Had there been any cat on the scene? If there was, the Shaggy Man could well believe it spent its time in the tops of trees, or the farther corners of attics and cellars, when a yapper like that held the fort. Certainly Dorothy had never mentioned any kitten of hers—from that day to this. It was only from the lass's friends in Oz that Shag knew that any such little white cat existed.

The picket gate was not bolted, or wired fast. The Shabby Man crossed the neglected lawn. Hmm: as was to be expected, the bank lawyers had been here and secured the doors against intruders. Same story all around the house *and* the slanting trap to the storm-cellar steps.

But Shag was not a tramp for nothing. He soon had the kitchen window open and the freedom of the premises. Business-like he unlatched the Oz-flag suitcase on the kitchen table. Here was why he had gathered no moss, *or* rolling stones, as souvenirs on his trek from California. His new-found yen to collect was going to be sacrificed, this trip, to the welfare of Princess Dorothy. He would fill the carry-all with mementos for her from her old home. Well, partly fill! He wasn't going to load it so heavy he couldn't lug it any further.

The kitchen, however, yielded items of possible interest only to the girl's Aunt Em: He took a few: a potato peeler, a darning egg, a curling iron. Who knew what the woman might miss in Oz? The Shaggy Man was not that well acquainted with her. From the parlor, and in a curious little compartment, no bigger than a closet, which the man surmised had served the farmer as an office, he picked up two corn-cob pipes, a filled tobacco pouch, and a paperknife. He paused at a mahogany humidior, unexpected note of self-allowed luxury, but regretfully decided it was too big.

Upstairs at the doorway to Dorothy's virginal bedroom the man stopped still in awe. To enter seemed like a violation. But somebody had entered. Somebody, Aunt Em or another, had pulled down the shades, so that the strong sun would not bleach things more than had happened already. The Shaggy Man tip-

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toed in and touched things.

Half an hour later he left the house with a strange great sense of consummation. Dorothy would be pleased, he knew she would, to see again her green plaited-leather dog leash, her five-year diary, four hair ribbons in different colors, the class photograph from District School No. 5, with—would those be school-board officials? including one particularly uncompromising-looking woman member, on the front seats.

But there was no cat on the premises to be pocketed. Of that he felt fairly certain. Would a cat with the freedom of a house stay away from it for as long as the three hours the man had spent scouring the dwelling, the grounds and outbuildings? With a sense of defeat, almost of grief, he had to give up the search. All this long way for nothing.

Would the other goal of his pilgrimage prove any more achievable? There, at least, it was in a case of a moving target. He fixed the kitchen window more secretly than he had found it and slung the suitcase over his shoulder by means of a bit of cord found in the barn. Then he was off.

"A white cat? You mean Eureka?" said a boy he met on the road. "Naw, I guess she was murdered with all the rest."

"Murdered?!" gasped the Shabby Man, startled once out of his customary phlegm. "What are you talking about, boy?"

"Well, it stands to reason, don't it?" The barefoot boy kicked at a stone in the road. "The whole dern family disappeared, didn't they? The folks around here figure some ol' tramp come by and—" He looked up in sudden brainless fright. "Say, you're an old tramp!" His mouth hung open for a moment and then he was over the rail fence and half way across the alfalfa field before Shag got said:

"If they're murdered, where are the bodies?"

After that he walked a little faster. Maybe even a love magnet was not proof against the ferocity of a mob if word was going around that a tramp was the cause of the vacating at the Mankato-Gale farm.

By that evening the Shabby Man's plodding steps, not light-

ened by the suitcase, had brought him to the town of Butterfield. Don't look for it on your maps. It isn't there (except in the real world of books, where it is there immortally). It is going to be there though. It only takes a hundred years or so for some smart exploiter to put two and two together and get the next-founded new village in northeast Kansas named "Butterfield" by the local elders. After that the Oz dollars will flow in. If Christmas, Florida, and Santa Claus, Indiana, can achieve prosperity on the strength of their postmarks, why not the "home town" of the famous Dorothy of Oz?

By this time poor Shag's spiritual state wasn't so good. In the first place, he was reminded afresh of why he had not carried even a bandanna on a stick in former times. It was badly "wing-weighting" to have to haul even a half-loaded suitcase. For the first time ever he was conscious of a wish to quit hitting the road and take a rest. But suppose he tried resting? Even before making such a move he knew he didn't want to lie down in a hayloft or under somebody's back porch only to waken and find the valise with its precious freight stolen while he slept.

He was not merry and bright as he trudged along the wooden sidewalks of the business section of the little town. Not a light anywhere. Not that he would have been able to enter any shop and buy a good or service anyway. It would just have been a little comforting if there had been a lamp alight and people.

But—there *was* a light. One little lit doorway in the range of darkened store-fronts. Someone must have just opened the door in an otherwise window-shaded establishment. Yes; somebody had appeared in the lighted aperture, a man with a paper in his hand. He seemed to be looking for something.

As the Shabby Man drew near a voice called, "You, fella? Run an errand? There's a quarter in it for you."

The Shabby Man sent a silent vote of thanks heavenward and hurried his steps. "Yes, sir! I'm your man," he made haste to assure the shirt-sleeved man in arm garters and green forehead-shade.

"Here," said the man with an air of urgency. "Bad news for

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Mrs. Norton, I'm afraid. The wire just came in. You know the Nortons' place? They're not on the line... Here, put down that suitcase..."

Good arrangement: Shag got rid of his load and the telegraph man had security for his trust. "Stranger here, hunh? Look, it's two blocks, along here, then left straight out east, mebbe half a mile. Got that? I don't think there'll be any answer. There's no train out tonight anyway. Come straight back."

Shag carried the bad news. He was sorry about that. He turned away before the couple had torn the yellow envelope, and nobody called him back. He collected his suitcase and the twenty-five cents. It was just enough for the farthest-back, smallest room at the Depot Hotel, overlooking the freight siding. The Shabby Man in a hotel! That was the day—and a famous first. The bourgeoisisation of the Shaggy Man, begun in the Emerald City of Oz, was proceeding apace in Butterfield, Kansas.

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

“Professor!!”

“Madam Mar—is it not?”

Nobody could believe anybody’s eyes. “You here?! in this deep and vast waste! How incredible. It was only days ago we met and dined together and talked of young Polychrome (who was most old) and of so many mysteries of time and age.”

“Yes, exactly! That Polychrome girl! It’s her fault I’m here—”

“Not to mention mysteries of the mind! What’s happened, Professor? Where are we and why is everything invisible around us?”

“Well, my dear, I can reassure you on that score. It’s our rulers, you see, Queen Ozma and Sorceress Glinda, who for a whim made Oz invisible—”

“Oz?! But it’s here that’s invisible!” interrupted the captious kangaroo. “I’m sure I left Oz, and I only noticed *afterwards* not being able to see... And yet—I can see you! How come?”

“Allow me to explain.” The professor recounted such details of the legislation and mechanics of the invisibilization as Princess Ozma had herself confided to him. “During the last few days I’ve had opportunity—alas!—to contemplate the situation in depth. You’ve noticed birds flying over?” he asked.

“Why, yes,” agreed Mar. “Quite a few. That too I didn’t understand.”

“Nor I at first. But what I think has happened is this: the good wonder-workers, directed, I understand, more especially by the Witch of the South, put all Oz under an intervist—”

“Which is...?” queried the kangaroo, whose Latin was even loser than Shakespeare’s.

“Sorry! ‘An authoritative prohibition debarring a person or place from sight.’ They’re quite common, really, but not in Oz—’til now. What must have happened and what neither Ozma, when she sanctioned it, nor Glinda when she promulgated it, suspected is that such an intervist is reciprocal. If they can’t see us, we can’t see them. It’s as simple as that.”

“And what would be the corollaries of that, professor?” said

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Mar, leaning back on her tail and getting comfortable (aside from feeling terribly dusty and a bit hungry).

The wogglebug crawled under an invisible sage bush and replied. Though the sun was invisible it obviously shone and its warmth could be felt... and felt less! in the white shade of a non-visible shrub.

"There are no physical barriers between our country and the rest of the world. In the unlikely event that they should traverse the great deserts without being able to see their goal ahead, creatures may still enter Oz. Once inside they would of course be invisible to Ozites. We in turn may leave Oz and continue to see ourselves, but nothing else."

"But those birds?!"

"Obviously Oz birds who have lost their way and are flying about in the same invisibility experienced by us."

"Dearie me, what a situation." The kindly kangaroo sighed, though comforted just the same to be now two in their predicament. "And what can we do?"

"Nothing, I should think." The wogglebug permitted himself as well an unscientific sigh. "Being Ozlings, we cannot starve to death, so I suppose we shall wander throughout eternity—or until one of the sorceresses catches on and sends us rescue."

As it happens, they did wander together for many further weeks. In the long periods of blankness the two had time to plumb to the depths the implications of what they, at least, regarded as a curse.

"Will the sorceresses catch on and send rescue?" reverted Mar one night. Night, alternated by day, did occur in those realms of invisibility but brought with it no increase of unseeingness. The invisibility was then merely black instead of white. Of course the pair did find it harder to see *each other* by night, and now, being once come together, they tended to stay put while it was dark. It would be too terrible now to lose one's companion.

"They must have twigged long since," stated Wogglebug, busy at a saguaro cactus he had managed to tap for water. The wanderers also tended to do their browsing by night, locating themselves by last light at some desert plantation they had felt their way to.



“People—I mean some humans—must by now have strayed over the border. Their absence will have been noted and reported. Maybe even ours have,” he finished in an access of ironical humility.

“Then all Queen Ozma has to do is look at her Magic Picture and—” Mar broke off.

“Exactly: and see nothing. Or rather: she may see us, but be unable to see where we are. That’s no good. I shouldn’t think the greatest magic in the world could serve to pinpoint where objects were to be found in hundreds of thousands of miles of undifferentiated invisibility.”

“Our Quadling ruler, Glinda, has a great book of records that lists everything happening in the world. She would surely know at once when we and others strayed across the frontiers.”

“Quite possibly. But that wouldn’t be any guide to finding us. as it happens, I’ve thought of that book myself sometimes in these days—and wondered. One knows nothing, of course, of the magical mechanics of the volume, but would it be capable of recording events, the existence of which there were no means of ascertaining by sight? If that were the case, the poor thing would have had to be busy all these centuries taking down everybody’s dreams and memories: things that ‘happen’ but that are merely unseeable by an outside (and recording) witness. The mind boggles. Glinda’s book would have to be as big as her whole palace to get it all down.”

“You say that Glinda, apparently alone, brought on this powerful enchantment. In that case it’s going to have to be her who cancels it..?”

“Yes, and in time I feel sure she will. But incidentally what a loss of face! She and Ozma are clearly not going to rush into any such reversal of their established policy. Probably one day they’ll just dispel the charm without any fanfare, indeed without any public announcement at all. Meanwhile we needn’t flatter ourselves we are so important that they’ll do it untimely just for our little sakes.”

With that chastening thought they both fell silent.

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

The cat was in the doghouse.

For the first time in her sojourn at the home of Retired Landowner Gulch the sun did not seem to rise and set for Eureka's benefit. She even began to think despairingly of moving on again, but when she did that the awful memories of damp and hunger and infelicitous treatment came back and she quailed. It was after all too darned comfortable where she was. As for her dream of getting to Oz: what a laugh! The wretched Dorothy had obviously forgotten all about her. Otherwise she would have looked at the Magic Picture long since and got Ozma to send for her.

No, there was nothing for it but to reingratiate herself with the Gulch woman.

To that end Eureka descended from the cozy attic rag heap to the kitchen. Nobody there. She leapt to the window-sill and looked into the garden. No one. She ended by doing a complete inspection tour of the house and grounds. She paused for fully five seconds on the cliff edge to survey the grey moving waters of the mighty Missouri: the maximum amount of time a cat will spend studying anything that is not alive or manipulated by herself.

Where *was* the old bat? Eureka knew... Whenever Miss Gulch was oddly unavailable she was in that mysterious room hitherto uninvestigated by the cat herself but designated by Miss Gulch "the still-room" (an echo perhaps from her former grander ambience?).

Eureka went and stood outside the door and meowed piercingly. It was boring but if she did it long enough she knew it would have the desired effect. Miss Gulch detested a cat's meow. On the other hand she clearly, Eureka had noted, doted on a cat's purring. Well, time enough for that when the caterwauling had done its work.

Twenty-five minutes by the kitchen clock and then the door flew open. "Wretched beast! Will you drive me to distraction with that miserable yowling?!" Eureka heard not a word but, poised for the spring, dashed between the woman's legs, was across the

cubby-hole room in one bound, clawed her way up the carved front of a tall black highboy, and crouched in the farthest ceiling corner among the cobwebs. Let Almira try to get her down from there! other than by fair words and promises.

Unexpectedly the old woman gave a rough laugh and said, "Never mind. You'd have to be let in some time if you're going to be a witch's demon." Humming the tune of the Lord's Prayer backwards she returned to the cabal she was laying with some very peculiar cards on the plank top of a sturdy table. Quickly every hair on Eureka's body rose.

'Witch's Demon'? Now almost as devoutly as she had longed to get into the room the cat yearned to get out.

Everything fell into place. The unexpected welcome at the start. The amiable manner that consorted so ill with the forbidding appearance. The best of everything for the new-accepted pet. The odd turns of phrase. Most of all, those strange physical residues from midnight rites. It had been on Eureka's tongue to say "witch" a dozen times. She just hadn't wanted to think anything so awful had happened to her. She was to be trained up to ride shotgun on a broomstick!

She! Eureka—who had been to Fairyland and petted by princesses—to come to this. Could she endure a life of crime?

Maybe she could.

After all, that soi-disant princess, Dorothy, didn't ogle a thing about her. Had waltzed off to Oz twice without a wave goodbye. Had not had the common curiosity to look in a magic view-finder a see what her pet was doing and send for her. Or *had* looked—and didn't send. It must be one or other. Either way, she, Eureka, was unloved. And she was too good not to be appreciated.

To hell with Oz. Here was an old hag who wanted nothing better than to strew roses before her. *Why not* cast her lot in with her? Anyway, what Almira Gulch was going didn't look that criminal. Eureka crept to the edge of the wardrobe and peered down.

Laying out cards with pictures of swords and forked clubs and hanged men, while mumbling words Eureka had never heard on or inside the earth. Nothing otherwise seemed to be happen-

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ing. No devils appearing out of pepperpots or genii rising from Coca-Cola bottles. Maybe she, Eureka, as 'demon', was being waited on to make a magical entrance from somewhere.

Okay. She would. She raised herself on her haunches and prepared to make her "feather flight." Eureka had a little magic too, if only cat magic. Sheathing and unsheathing her claws, for instance, and knowing perfectly when each stance was appropriate; that was a magic that humans, at least, could never account for. Now she launched herself and glided gracefully down to land pancake-light on the woman's shoulder.

Almira let out a squawk but kidded nobody. The cat's arrival was neither startling nor offensive to her. When Eureka began to purr deafeningly the beldam shushed her delightedly. "If you'd be still a minute you'd hear what the future's got in store... See there? The sprouting staff. That means that something is going to start over. What could it be? Our friendship perhaps?" Eureka gave a sudden burst of purr, then broke off. "That's right." Miss Gulch disengaged a hand to pull one of Eureka's forepaws briefly. "But the falling cliff! Whatever could that signify? I know the manual says it means an unexpected journey. But suppose it were literal!? and the bluffs out here are scheduled for collapse. Horrors. What do you suppose we ought to do? Anyway, I'll keep the broom by me for instant flight, just in case we get a moment's warning... Oh, but this is too tiresome. Look: the dangling man. No, of course it doesn't mean someone we know is going to be hanged. But it does mean that something unpleasant is going to happen, and in connection with a man. There'll never have been a train wreck! and anything happened to Ted?! I would be very sorry indeed." The woman muttered on and Eureka pretended to take an interest. The pleasant minutes ticked away.

And then—oh, nuts!—she heard the doorbell ring.

It was Graduation Day in the forest. All thirty-two of the fairy band were in attendance; Lurline (naturally) officiating. Even some ryls and knooks from outlying fields and streams had been invited, to swell the crowd and make Miss Polychrome feel like she was a pretty important fairy, having passed her finals with flying draperies and been granted her M.A. (Magic Arts) degree, which, in her case, as a rainbow maiden, was sunny-cum-cloudy.

Poly was dressed as usual all in rainbow colors but instead of the customary skull-cap wore a mortar-board. She was standing at the edge of the glade and from there she stepped out and paced measuredly along the way cleared among the admiring on-lookers at each side until she came to a halt before the queen fairy's toadstool throne. There she knelt humbly and waited for the mantle of dignity to descend about her shoulders.

This it did only figuratively. Queen Lurline stepped down and came to her, raising her up and placing a butterfly kiss on each cheek.

"Well done, young woman," she said and gave her a scroll case. She didn't give her a scroll because Polychrome had no wall to hang a diploma on but a scroll *case* was very useful for carrying the magic wand the rain fairy was now accorded. There were, in fact, one or two documents of gossamer stating that the graduate was authorized to practise all forms of magic (fairy *and* witchcraft) by land, sea, or air, and serving as passports to wherever she chose to go. The act of commencement was accomplished when Lurline hung this case with its rolled-up contents and dangling seals of Excellence, Merit, and Not Bad over Polychrome's shoulder by a silver cord. "Go forth," quoth the Queen, "and do good wherever you may."

A few dainty tears of movedness were shed on either side. Then, in gayer mood and as opposed to the alumna's official academic awards, Lurline gave her a graduation present. "All the girls chipped in to get this for you," she confided. "You see?: it's a two-way wrist wireless, Mr. Marconi's latest refinement. It isn't even

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generally available out in the great world yet. If either you or I should ever find it necessary to send an urgent message, all you do is press this tiny button. The other will hear a beeping sound and then both will be able to speak to each other."

"Oh, how grand!" cried the Rainbow's daughter. "I'll call you all the time to let you know how. I'm getting on!"

Lurline, with a droll look, could do no less than agree that that would be charming.

Now nothing remained but for Polychrome to go round the circle of her fairy cousins and take fond leave. She even patted a few knooks on the head. They all trailed after her as she danced along the forest path leading to the great open plain where she would wait for rain.

That proved not to be quite as tedious an interim as it might sound, since Lurline had been able to send word some days earlier that at last the errant rainbow girl was willing and able to return home. The fairy band got out their crocheting and sat down to wait. When they ran out of materials they had only to pluck threads of thistledown from the wandering air.

Soon a cloud no bigger than a manikin's hand appeared over the far horizon. Or no, make that two clouds, one traveling much faster than the other. The one, blown by the hurrying wind, approached rather fast, and on a somewhat eccentric course. It seemed to be hunting for a mountain peak on which to tear itself open, but on the flat plain between Burzee and the desert there weren't any such. The crowd of fairies watched as it passed on over head in the direction of Trom—and then, curiously, it doubled back!

Now it began to move in an even more erratic wag, seeming to lurch up and down. One might have assessed that it was trying to employ centrifugality to part itself, much as a doorknob in a paper bag will fly out the bottom if you shake it enough.

Meanwhile the second cloud was coming on in a leisurely fashion, *slower* than the velocity of the wind. It was apparently not trying for any effect at all but drifted slowly on in one direction. It was an odd cloud. It looked like a big puffy doughnut standing

on end and with something indistinct in the middle of it, like a wiener thrust through a bagel.

The fairies now scarcely knew which way to look at this two-ring circus in the sky. But quickly the decision was made for them when the eccentrically moving cloud located itself directly over them, made a supreme effort—and let loose a deluge. The fay folk all rushed for cover under leaves, all except Polychrome, who stood joying in falling rain for the first time in many months..

The worst of the cloudburst passed over and the the sun flared out again, beaming down through thousands of raindrops, and there you were!: as radiant a rainbow as you'd want to see arc'ed down. But it was a strictly temporary utilitarian affair. Without time-consuming backward glances Poly ran to the foot of it and began to mount her father's leg.

Up, up she crawled, then scrambled, then danced seeming to merge in her varicolored draperies into the rainbow bands of every hue. The watchers below could only just make out her black mortarboard near the highest level of the bow when—heavens! the weird doughnut-shaped cloud crashed into the rainbow and blotted out everything. The shadow of the drifting cloud-island obscured that part of the bow below it, and as for the section above: as if overwhelmed by the collision it immediately began to fade and in a moment not a wrack of it remained behind.

And what of Polychrome?

It would appear that she had been shanghaied by the interloping cloud and was now drifting irretrievably away to the north-east as an inadvertent passenger on Sky Island.

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

Mr. Cantion fell under the spell of the Love Magnet like all the rest. He thought the shabby man was the nicest old man! and wanted to put little jobs in his way to help him on. So it was that when Shag strolled past the telegraph office, not quite fortuitously, the next day, Mr. Cantion in the doorway said genially, "Got time for another delivery?" and the Shabby Man was in business.

The first thing he did was stay not so shabby. He went to the dry-cleaning shop and had his Alpinish suit steamed and pressed. Possessing no other outfit, he stood in a closet while the work proceeded. Then he went to a barber shop and had himself slick-shaven except for his distinguished Van Dyke. When he returned to the telegraph office as the Snazzy Man, the telegraphist hesitated to employ him as an errand boy anymore and began to teach him the intricacies of wireful communication. That night in the hotel the Coloradan memorized the Morse code and he was in (another) business.

He had been in town a week before he got up his courage to go to call on the Carmichaels. By now he could afford the grandest bouquet at Bandler's Blossoms. He timed his visit well and succeeded in arriving on the front porch of the jeweler's house at a time when Earl Carmichael was safely away at the store.

Molly the maid came to the screen door. "The missus? I'll see if she's in." Of course she was. Visitors were so few and door-to-door salesmen so inoffensive in 1910 that there was no reason for her not to be at home.

Penelope appeared at the door, then opened the screen for a clearer look, and finally pronounced the Snazzy Man's name. I don't know what it was; do you?

"Penelope."

"I hardly knew you," she said.

"It'll be the beard," answered the caller, for lack of anything else to say, right at first, that would make any sense.

Penelope Thacker Carmichael's eye fell on the Magnet at once. She exhaled a little sigh. "So it was you?" she said quietly. "I



thought it must have been."

The man's hand was at his lapel unhooking the talisman. "I came to bring it back."

"Let us talk about it," said the woman and pushed the screen door wider. Silently the two walked inside. Silently the man handed over the bouquet and the brooch. Mrs. Carmichael took one but not the other. "I'll get a vase," said she.

When the yellow blossoms glowed like a small sun in a green glass bowl before the lace curtains the visitor said, "But not the magnet?"

"Time has brought me a little—what would you call it?: 'insight'? Things should stay with those who need them—or love them."

"Yes, I needed it. But you loved it."

"Did I? Yes, perhaps I did. But I would never have—taken it in order to possess it. You did—and so I suppose your need was greater."

"You call that insight? What about all the thieves and robbers in the world who are driven by every ignoble motive to 'take' things? Does that mean that their 'need' is so great? and we are all to lie down quietly and let them do it?"

"I would have to. I couldn't dirty my hands by scrabbling to get back things that had been taken from me."

"Even when something is offered back?"

"That makes good the past, and I thank you. But what about the future? I treasured the magnet, not for its strange power but for my father's blood, but now I know that seeing the magnet daily also made me think of him daily and of his pitiful and inexplicable end. Not having the talisman, I have not done so—quite so often—and that made me... lees unhappy. So you see: it's quite a selfish motive of mine; I don't want to see, and be saddened, every day."

The Snazzy Man pinned the ornament back in its accustomed place and looked again at her who had been Penelope Thacker and his great love. She was a great lady now, he realized that clearly. He also admired her charm and mature grace, her dignity

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and beauty. But he didn't love her any more... not since she had incautiously laid down the Love Magnet and it had become his.

But still he could learn from her, even at his age and at hers—though he wondered if he could ever be so selfless, relinquishing possessions for noble reasons. He had only just begun to care about possessions! Yet he could see that her attitude was the right one. True contentment could never come as a product of mere ownership. You could be happy creating things but never in just possessing them. (And the Shaggy Man had never created anything.)

“—and loving things.” Did she say that? He had been wool-gathering, having ideas he had never had before, in too many wandering years.

“Yes: I said happiness comes from making things and from loving things. I suppose the measure of love is how much you mind when you lose a thing, a person. It happens to me all the time.”

“All the time?” said the man. “Has somebody besides me been low enough to steal from you?”

“Not stealing so much. But things can still get away. People die. People go away. Ambitions don't materialize. Hopes are disappointed. Fondness isn't returned.”

“You've had all that?” wondered her visitor. “It's hard to believe. You seem so—untouched.” The Snazzy Man was having to grope for words in a conversation of a solemnity unfamiliar to him.

“Oh, I'm undemonstrative.” Mrs. Carmichael gave a little mocking laugh. “I don't have crying jags. I never yell. But inside...”

“Never mind! I'm sure you could enjoy a glass of lemonade. I won't suggest anything stronger—though I know where my husband keeps his supply from over the state line.”

The descent from the lofty in the woman's tone was almost shocking. She too had felt its strangeness for him and was trying to turn the tenor of the talk. Shag could see that and wondered again at her considerateness.

While she was out of the room the Man looked around. The

room was pleasant in its muted soft grey sort of way. It was evident that the children's voices he could hear somewhere were seldom raised in this room. It was kept for formal or solemn occasions, as now. But not too solemn! Penelope's last words had seemed to want to imply...

The antimacassars were spotless. The aspidistra was thriving. Nothing looked very interesting, except possibly that spotted china dog on the whatnot against the opposite wall. Restless, Shag rose to go look at it.

"You like Toby?" said Mrs. Carmichael, returning with the tray. "So did our little friend." She put down the salver beside the figurine. The Snazzy Man looked a question. "I said friends go away. There's an example."

She took a chair and left her guest to serve himself. "A little white cat turned up one day. We all grew fond of it. Then another day it disappeared and was never seen again. That's the way: love things and lose them."

Shag was struck. "A white cat? What was its name?"

"Who's to say? The children called it 'That Cat'."

"A stray, then? Could you describe it?"

The woman looked in query. "Why, quite an ordinary little white cat. Rather small for its apparent age, I thought. Something kittenish about it. Blue eyes—"

"Eureka!" cried the Snazzy Man.

"Have you found something?" asked Mrs. Carmichael in amused surprise.

"I hope so. I haven't mentioned it, but besides, my duty to bring back your magnet there was also a commission to retrieve a friend's mislaid pet kitten—"

"This wasn't, strictly speaking, a kitten."

"No, Dorothy's isn't either." The Snazzy Man told the tale, only leaving out all disconcerting references to magic. "And the worst of it is: I've never seen the cat, only had a description of it. I wouldn't actually recognize it if I saw it. It's like looking for a needle in a haystack."

"And Kansas is your haystacks" said Mrs. Carmichael, getting

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interested. "I feel sure it's the very cat. Everything fits: the description, the times as you specify them, and the cat's personality. It was an independent little thing. It spent all its time in the attic, curled around this statuette."

Shag examined the ohina figurine with interest. "I wonder why," he pondered. "Eureka is known not to get along with dogs—at least, one dog."

"Who knows what goes on in the mind of a cat? She clearly loved this 'dog' so much that it surprises me she left. If not for our sakes, then for the pug's."

"You know she left'?"

"Well, she wasn't 'cat-napped', if that's what you mean," said Penelope, continuing to lighten the conversation. "I think we were a way-station. She was on her way somewhere."

"To Oz!" blurted the Snazzy Man and then blushed suddenly.

"Oz'?", said Mrs. Carmichael.

"To us', I said," lied Shag, trying to recapture lost ground. "To her friends, who miss her. To young Dorothy—and her relatives. And others who sent me to find her."

"And where are they?" pursued his hostess.

"Er—east of here," Shag blundered on awkwardly, determined not again to reveal that he was an emissary from fairyland. It didn't go with the calm grey atmosphere in this room and the antimacassars. People might laugh. He didn't want to be laughed at by Penelope.

She was miles ahead of him as usual. Instantly grasping his intention of secrecy, Mrs. Carmichael didn't let the faintest pause happen before she said enthusiastically, "East: of course! From that farm as you describe it, to Butterfield, is straight east. And she's headed on further easterly, I'll bet you!"

The boyish turn of phrase was charming in the lady. But Shag didn't want to bet. He was sure she was right. From utter hopelessness the idea of finding Dorothy's pet had again become a possibility. He brightened from the depression he had felt throughout the visit so far.

"So I have only to hike on straight east and ask at every house

I pass..."

"That's all!" laughed Penelope and sipped from her glass.

"No, it *is* hopeless," said the man and sank in gloom again.

"Don't forget I've never seen this cat. Nor she me. How can I recognize her if we *should* meet?"

"She'll recognize *you*," said the woman.

"But I've said: as far as I know Eureka's never laid eyes on me!"

"Never mind. She may not know you—but she'll recognize *that*," and Mrs. Carmichael pointed at the china dog.

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

Queen Ozma's chickens were coming home to roost.

Some roosting had been in order for quite a time now. Indeed, two days hadn't passed after Ozma and Glinda's laying of the spell of invisibility over Oz before complaints began to come in.

Nobody seemed to mind that Oz was invisible. Nobody even seemed to notice. But what they did mind very much was that all outside Oz was, in turn, invisible to them. Your Ozite in the street didn't know what caused it but on the day that the red sorceress' charm went into effect the clouds that had happened to be floating suspended over the magic land moved on in a generally eastward direction until they all disappeared and then no more took their place. Although there were no (visible) clouds the sun was obscured. When it rained, it rained (invisibly) out of a clear sky; the falling drops could not be seen. And when night came there were no moon or stars. Everything outside of Oz was invisible and everything from outside that came into, or over, Oz remained invisible.

The wonderworkers ought to have thought of that when they passed their enchantment. The world could get along without Oz but Oz could not get along without the world outside. It should have occurred to Glinda that if you implement a blanket invisibility spell, creatures outside can't see it but neither can those within see out. Invisibility of that sort is of course reciprocal. But she suffered a blind spot.

So now the chickens, many of them invisible, were coming home to roost. Letters arrived every day at the palace, fluttering like leaves in autumn. One of the first, badly spelt, was from the children of Mar, the capricious kangaroo. It said (with spelling corrected, for Ozma's eyes, by the court scribe, "Our ma. Where is she? She went away. She left nothing for dinner. We can't find the can-opener. Please send our ma. Or else a can-opener.")

Then came an urgent communication on embossed lavender paper from the Secretariat of the Court of Ix. Her Serene Highness Zixi desired to ask if anything was known of the whereabouts

of the esteemed Witch of the North Tattypoo, who had been expected on a semi-state visit but had never arrived. In almost the same mail came an enormous postcard painfully scrawled by the rubber-gloved claw of Agnes the Dragon, reporting the same circumstances. And there were others, from relatives of various Oz travelers who had mysteriously disappeared.

Feathered migrants without number were oonstantly in touch with the Palace of Magic, reporting that kinsbirds of theirs had vanished. Ozma could never get away from her desk, what with all the people and animals she had constantly to reassure that their loved ones were not lost forever but only temporarily. She was there still when a deputation of three humans was announced, but she had not had time to receive them before Jellia Jamb ran back in to say, "There are more blackbirds on the line!"

"Yes, I can see them!" retorted the Girl Ruler almost snappishly and gestured through the adjacent window, from which there was a view of four and twenty black songsters huddling, with fluffedout feathers against the invisible rain, on the telephone wire.

It was a full twenty minutes before she could step to the big pier-glass, settle her crown, tuck an ear-poppy (dislodged by the telephone receiver) back in place, and ring to inform Jellia that she was now receiving. The wizard Wam, Professor Nowitall, and Sub-Registrar Fex hurried in, hats in hands.

With minimal genuflecting they stated their problem. "It's all my fault, Your Grace," confessed Wam. "I told a fib." The story came out: Wam, remembering young (old) Polychrome's plea, had thought it a good jest to send Professor Wogglebug, when he came enquiring, on a wild goose chase to the north when in point of fact the rainbow maiden, as he knew, had departed for the south. When the deputation from the Royal College showed up, in their turn, asking after the Professor, the wizard, shaken out of his complacency, had joined them immediately to drive, in his patented wind-powered quatricycle, over the country line to Tattypoo's residence.

The dragon housekeeper's news was not encouraging. Realizing what must have happened, Wam abandoned, on behalf of his

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companions, any thought of pressing on to the court of Ix and instead directed their wheels toward the Oz capital. It was obvious Wogglebug was lost on the Impassable Desert. What could those in authority do about it?

Ozma had a little orgy of contrition. "I had no idea it would work out like this! I acted only with the best of intentions. We wanted to shield Oz from further penetration from the outside world, chiefly, of course, penetration by the forces of wickedness that we learn are on the alert not only inside Oz but also across the deserts. I was not told the pall of invisibility would operate also in reverse—though of course it does seem logical. I am most upset."

The callers observed a few moments of respectful silence. But Ozma's upsetness was not going to alter cases. Presently Professor Nowitall took up the theme again: "Would it not be possible to require the powerful Sorceress of the South to reverse the charm?"

"Of course it would, Professor," said Ozma with something approaching a pout. "But at least until we can perfect some other all-embracing method of screening or, to be honest, I should say 'blocking'—newcomers to Oz, it will have to stay in effect. However! that does not absolve us of the obligation to rescue Ozites who all unwittingly may have strayed across the frontier—"

"And what, your grace, of creatures from the enchanted lands beyond the deserts?" interjected Wizard Wam. "People from Merryland and Ev and the offshore island countries have heretofore traveled to Oz freely."

"Indeed!" quoth Professor Eydoant. "I recall your majesty's birthday party only last summer and the glamor of standing on the sidelines to watch the arrival of Her Majesty of Ix and the King of Noland and the ruler of Hiland-Loland and so many more. Such an occasion can now never be repeated."

"Please, professor!" Ozma raised her hand and spoke with a suggestion of asperity. "I *know*. I've said that passing the invisibility law was stupid. What more would you have?"

The academic was quite inarticulate in his bumbling apolo-



gies. Ozma relented. "Summut we will do," she quoted, "but what?" The fairy princess was stumped.

Young Fex was just about to make bold to offer a suggestion when Jellia Jamb appeared again at the office door, while an unfamiliar babble of girlish voices was heard somewhere behind her. "Your Grace," announced the little maid, "nineteen daughters of the Rainbow crave an audience of Your Grace."

The girl ruler raised her eyebrows and lifted her shoulders fractionally in a gesture of 'what next?' and signified her assent. Fex was thrilled to bits when Aurora and all her sisters came tripping into the little room. The press was so great that the Registrar was squeezed against the bookcases by the nearness of Regenvlaag, Arcenciel, and Lucy, but he spoke no word of complaint.

"Oh, Princess Ozma," wailed Aurora and fell on her knees. "The most awful thing has happened! Our Poly's been kidnapped!!"

"Yes!" chimed in Curcubeu. "The last we saw of her she was sailing away across the desert—"

"With her head sticking out of a low-flying cloud," supplied Sateenkaari.

"It wasn't a cloud exactly," corrected Tien Kang.

"No, more like an island," agreed Naiad, "but sort of carried along by a cloud."

"The cloud was shaped like a doughnut," put in Prism, as if that were important.

"Yes," marveled Alouette: "dense! Almost solid-looking like an inflated inner-tube—"

"But a different color," reminded Raduga.

"Color'?" echoed Iris. "You mean 'colors'. It was sort of pink on one aide and blue on the other—with a lavender bit in between."

"Not at all your normal cloud colors," offered Opal. "And the funny part was: that other strange islandy piece was the *same* colors as the doughnutty part."

"Dad knew right away what it was," recalled Regenvlaag from

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near Fex's left cheek.

"What?" asked Arcenciel from the other cheek.

"Didn't you hear? It's called 'Sky Island'," put in Pluvia.

"He says he's noticed it floating along in the sky lots of time," said Aquarelle.

"I never did," complained Arcobaleno—but then, she missed a lot.

"I wonder what makes it go," mused Vattenande.

"Pneumaticity and convection currents, naturally," informed Lucy, turning for a moment from Fex's chin.

"I do hope Poly will be happy there," murmured Farvespill.

"But she mustn't *stay* there! We've got to get her back!" summed up Roong.