

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

From boredom, frustration, and near-hopelessness the common-sensical kangaroo changed to a mood of delight and anticipation. She borrowed a pair of mittens from a Pink and for the time being forgot about her quest. She was now suddenly involved in a larger one! and soon felt inspired to play a larger role in it.

It was in the little hut the Pinks had assigned for her use as 'Tween-Queen' that Ruler Pro-Tem Polychrome explained the procedure to her first rescuees. "We won't be going back to Oz 'til we've gathered up all the poor wanderers in the desert. I hope you're not in a frightful rush? Can President Nowitall carry on for you at the college, Professor? I've had word by radio that your children were provided with a can-opener, Madame Kangaroo, so that's all right. We may be as much as a month or two airborne. You see, we have to go all the way to America to pick up one truant." Polychrome, if she had not been a vice-Queen, would be said to have giggled.

"Oh?" said Mar. "Who might that be?"

"Well, he's called the 'Shaggy Man'," said Poly, continuing to blush. "I don't think he has any actual given name."

"Why, I know the Shaggy Man!" exclaimed the kangaroo, and she related the chance encounter on the road all those months ago. "What fun! I mean: what a tragedy! You mean he's lost somewhere in darkest America?"

"Yes, and, you see, his situation isn't like yours and the professor's. He got out into the *visible* world, so he's not just wandering about in a featureless—and, to such as you, invisible—desert. He's going to be much harder to spot, especially since he won't have a clue we're looking for him. Incidentally we're also to keep an eye out for Princess Dorothy's white cat. But I count finding her a virtual impossibility.

"The thing is: though we here on Sky Island, a fairy entity, are immune to the current invisibility spell over Oz—and can thus observe whatever we want both in and out of Oz on the continent of Sempernunquam, we have our own invisibility problem out in

the great ‘real’ world. You know, of course, that magic things and beings, except under special circumstances, are unable to be seen by humans in the outside world. Though there may be fairies in the bottoms of all gardens nobody can see them save those rare individuals with fairy eyes.

“In the present case, however, that isn’t the big issue. What is worse is that we too can only dimly see the ‘real’ world. That world is like an old parchment document for us, with faded dim tracery only just visible... just enough to give us our bearings—if only to confuse us!

“It isn’t *quite* hopeless. As things in that world come close to us they can be seen. If a human earthling were somehow to make his way onto Sky Island it—for him—and he for us—would be perfectly palpable and visible. But how to get that close?! with a big unwieldy airborne island.

“We’ll cruise as near as we can in order to try to make out *something* down on the ground. On the other hand we can’t risk getting so close that *we* turn out to be fully visible from the earth’s surface. Fays know! what earthlings might do, now that they have these new flying machines. We wouldn’t want crowds of *them* landing on Sky Island.

“Anyway, we’ll get ourselves to Kansas: that part will be manageable enough—and start trying to locate the poor wandering Shaggy Man...” A romantic tinge came over the Rainbow’s Daughter’s voice. “As I say, it won’t be easy. We’ll have to maintain full-time look-out duty. I’ll need volunteers—”

Mar instantly put in for that assignment. Now she would really feel like she was playing a part “What does it entail?” she wanted to know.

“I’m glad you asked that,” praised the rain fairy. “The island’s pilot has periscopes but they, naturally, are trained out more or less horizontally, simply as an aid to air navigation. No one ever thought of its being desirable to be able to survey the earth beneath. Hence, we’re going to want people—or animals—” here Poly cast acknowledging glances at both the marsupial and the hexa-pod— “stationed continually at points round the perimeter

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of the island (though not at night, of course), simply staring down through binoculars at the ground —”

“Ideal!” said the contributing kangaroo with enthusiasm. “Being acquainted with the Shaggy Man I will recognize him at once.”

“That is: if you can, after all, see him,” warned the fairy. “There is just one little assist we may be able to count on. Luckily for us, anything magic on earth is brilliantly visible to other fairies and magical beings and the Shaggy Man is carrying a magic magnet. There again there are imponderables.” (Polychrome had picked up quite a vocabulary during her months at R.C.O.) “When I knew him he used to carry it in his pocket. In that case, of course, it wouldn’t be any more visible to us than to anyone else. We can only hope that chance allows that for some reason he sometimes has it out in his hand. Then it will show with a very bright glow (to our eyes!) and you’ll be able to pick it up. But it’s a chance in a thousand. Be ready for disappointments...”

Professor Wogglebug agreed to spell the co-operative kangaroo on lookout duty, and when the strayed Oogabooans and Yips and others got themselves collected off the desert and onto the island they too, in order to expedite their own eventual return home, volunteered. The result was that after Sky Island passed over the Atlantic (or Pacific; I forget which) and began to approach Kansas—a regular ring of faces was poised, round the clock, peering down over the grassy banks of the aerinsula. Even at night! When word got around that the Shaggy Man’s magnet might just be able to be caught sight of, glowing, there were a few hardy souls who offered to go on watch during the dark hours. What a feather in somebody’s cap if he should be the one to find the one right grain of sand on the beach. But faithfulest of all on lookout duty was the quixotic kangaroo.

Things were going on at a merry clip aboard the island. When Tattypoo, good witch of the North, was hauled aboard, she had a tendency to take over. At first she even presumed to tell Polychrome what to do, but the rainbow’s daughter radioed Queen Lurline and the latter straightened out the intrusive one:

“Tat? That you? Listen, Poly’s doing all right running the

flying-island concession for the time being, so keep your dainty whites in your pockets, okay? Or if you must throw your weight around, do it in the direction of the Pinks. You might pass the time, for instance, in giving evening classes in simple thaumaturgy among the natives. That'll keep you in practice and keep them out of mischief as well. But nothing they can use to wage war with, of course."

Tattypoo knew better than to dispute with what was in fact, her mother (though the relationship, for the period in question and for both parties, remained in obscurity). She left Polychrome to direct Mr. Tinker in the onward physical progress of the island and devoted herself to creating joy among the Sunsetters and the Sunrisers. She did this by instructing them in the simpler skills of how to make things grow larger or smaller on order or move about from place to place without visible means of support, or change color or appearance—or even to disappear completely (but only briefly!). It was a marvelous new toy for the Sky Islanders and magic became their passion, relieving the boredom that was really all that had been the matter with them and damping the animosities they had formerly given way to merely to have something to do.

The island people with their new accomplishments became quite a trial for their temporary guests. They *would* keep treating the rescued Ozites as guinea-pigs for their new dexterity in magic. As immigrants the Oz people were naturally regarded as more or less expendable and with no rights or dignity of their own. When a Sunsetter wanted to practise teleportation he would move a few Oogabooans hither and yon just for fun, or a Sunriser might make the Prince of Doodlefump or Professor Wogglebug invisible or twelve yards wide, and then Tattypoo would have to come along and undo the damage.

One habit of the mischievous tribes was particularly pervasive. They were all pink already and they insisted that the newcomers conform to prevailing custom and take on that most charming of all colors. When in Rome... They turned them all pink.

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In Polychrome's case one hardly noticed. She was very pink-complexioned to start with. But to see a rose-colored wogglebug or a carmine kangaroo was quite a thrill. The visitors shrugged and for the nonce let the islanders have their way. At least pinkness didn't hurt. Indeed, everyone's health seemed better than usual. They all, all the time, felt in the pink.

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Alice had got very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank so she had run across the field after a rabbit and gone after it down its large hole under the hedge. She fell past the orange marmalade and began to approach the center of the earth. She wondered if she would fall right through the planet—and she did! and came out in the Antipathies, where she had to ask the people what the name of the country was. “Please, ma’am, is this New Zealand or Australia?”

It turned out to be Australia and Alice was on top of Ayres Rook, indeed dangerously near the edge of it. She turned to walk away but the quicker she walked the nearer she moved backwards towards the brink and she was just going to topple—

The Shaggy Man woke almost with a shriek and found himself on the point of falling out of the harness loft where he had taken refuge. His noise wakened the white cat and produced movement in the unsleeping toy dog. Shag’s head was hanging over the edge of the loft floor and he peered down fearfully to see if anybody else had reacted. No, the big room below remained dark. A horse snuffled and another shifted hoofs with a rumble.

What a dream! He thought he was the author of that “Alice” book and he seemed to be following the girl adventurer like an invisible shadow. But Alice herself had not in fact fallen on through the rabbit hole to the other side of the earth. Who had done that? Nobody he knew. Yet somebody he knew had been in Australia. Who was it? Oh, he knew perfectly well, and what was the sense of his dream’s pretending she and he were somebodies else. Why didn’t his dreams call spades spades?

Wearily the man crawled down out of the loft. The cat followed him and the dog followed the cat. The hobo was indifferent to them. He’d got so he didn’t care if they followed or not. He would never get back to Oz now so what did it matter whether he preserved and carefully maintained that stuck-up cat? He had been abandoned by his newmade friends off in that magic land and would never see them again. It was really too dreary to think about.

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He would just put one foot before the other and follow them and not reflect to right or left. Maybe the old life of aimless wandering would reclaim him and after a long time he might forget the so unlikely and briefly glimpsed marvels of Oz.

He'd keep on west. He would get back to the California coast. He might *just* find the magic continent still docked there. He wasn't going to count on it! But for the nonce it was a feeble motivation, just to keep him moving, just to keep him from doing himself an injury.

Eureka the cat didn't oars either. She didn't care for the Shaggy Man, that is. He was nothing to her. She tended rather to miss Miss Gulch—a little bit. Not enough to think of trying to make her way back to her. The cat had somebody looking after her, after a fashion, and that was all that mattered. What she did care about and delighted in was that the amusing china dog had come to life and was there for her to play with. That it had gained life was to Eureka, since her Oz experience, no great marvel; she was merely pleased.

Naturally the dog was not, as in her strange, intuitive, but wrong dream, French. Rather it proved to be English, and cockney at that, but with a heavy American overlay due to the long period it had passed in America after its Royal Doulton manufacture elsewhere.

Curiously, the dog seemed to have a memory of all its years prior to its having come alive just now. If Eureka had been a reflective cat she might have been horrified at the thought that all "insensate" things can perceive what happens to them. A tree in a forest fire suffers all the dread and pain of a sentient creature burning. A flower pulled up by the roots knows the torment a cat would feel if its feet were suddenly yanked off. A plate shattered knows all the keen agony of an animal—or man—torn in a hundred parts. A book at the bottom of a lake dissolves to mush as unwillingly as any feeling being. We are only blessed in that they can't tell us so.

But Toby's fate was not (so far) so grim. He had lost that toe when the sweet silly little girl succeeded in pushing him off the whatnot, but otherwise his experience had been merely boring,

not painful. He had had to sit up so straight so long and peer so concentratedly into the middle distance! Now it was marvelous to let down completely and run around like mad and totally tire oneself out doing things—not with *not* doing them. What though he was china and breakable? He could only smash once and he'd take the chance.

That cat behaved strangely unlike a cat. Toby was glad to accept the fact and the proffered palship. The thing was, of course, that the china dog didn't smell like a dog (or anything) and there-with disappeared all sense of threat for the cat.

The two romped along the country roads and *just* kept the frumpy old Shabby Man in view. They ran and chased and rollicked and rolled and lay down and snuggled. Sometimes Toby helped Eureka forage, though unable to partake of the prey afterwards. Lackadaisically they trailed the haggard hobo across the country, not asking where he was going—or caring.

The group passed through Butterfield again. Shag with his tail between his legs kept well out of the way of the telegraph office and the home of Penelope Carmichael. Eureka didn't bother to reflect that she had spent some weeks in that house or Toby, that he had spent years. Besides, if they were to see Mrs. Carmichael, and she to take note that her former ornament was alive, it would be too unbelievable, too much like she was losing her mind. Better not. Yet was it not a pity to leave her, unknowing, in a world so deprived that a simple thing like a favorite toy's coming to life was utterly impossible?

The wayfarers followed the dirt road on to Dorothy's front-yard gate—and there the journey ends. For they heard a voice through a cloud calling in Elfland tones, frail and far away, yet tinkling like silver bells: "Shaggy Man...! Yoo-hoo! Shaggy Man...."

The old man fell down in a sort of a taking. The cat and the china dog sat one on each side of him and waited patiently. Presently a great mauve kangaroo came bounding along the road and stopped at the garden gate.

It didn't say anything. Kangaroos can't converse in Kansas. It just leaned over and patted the enchanted dog on the head, then



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indicated it should crawl inside her pouch. Next it put out a little weak paw and took a paw of Eureka's. Finally it extended a mittened hand to the gnarled hand of the Shaggy Man.

The kangaroo looked up into the sky, where something seemed to be casting a great pale shadow, though the earthlings could not quite make out what the thing was. The animal seemed to be waiting for something to happen.

In a few moments it did. Then, in spite of all, this part of the story had a happy ending.

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The ocean was transflown and Sky Island came to America.

Polychrome, in conference with Mr. Tinker, stayed close to the controls to guide the island as surely as might be to the hoped-for rendezvous somewhere in northeast Kansas. The great blue of the ocean gave way to the great green and then drifted purposefully interiorwards. Sky Island had no motive power of its own. It was borne up and borne on by the air and the winds. But it was susceptible to a good deal of steering. Progress depended always, however, on the prevailing winds and these, it not being hurricane season, were not going that fast.

Poly was growing ever more wrought and fraught. Just a few more days, maybe, and she would be in the presence of her love. How marvelously destiny had played into her hands! It was no wonder that she'd been a silly dear idiot and fainted dead away when she got word from her boss fairy that 1) she was to be in charge of rescue operations from Sky Island, and 2) the final pick-up was to be of her own Shaggy Man—if she could find him. What a perfect stage-setting for the denouement she dreamed of.

As the island glided down toward the mighty Missouri things began to come more into focus. Or rather, they didn't. Where from a great height one had from Sky Island a view as of a great living, clearly outlined, mostly green or yellow-brown map, the closer down toward the surface of the earth the aerinsula descended the vaguer became the shapes of things, though all the while appearing much larger and closer. Poly supposed it was the optical effect of magic. Magic was all around everywhere but it was well known that earthlings couldn't see it. Correlatively, from "the magic side" too the visibility of mundane earthly things was decreased. This was most discouraging but yet not fatal. There was something magic about the Shaggy Man and that was what they were going to beam in on.

Then the watchers on the island got a surprise. In humdrum workaday America there was magic to be seen! a great deal of magic! At night, especially, it was to be observed in a thousand

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pin-prick glows, scattered like the color-reversed product of a vast pepper-mill all across the landscape.

The first individual they picked out for study as possessing this magic was not the Shaggy Man! Far from it. It was a young fellow operating a harrow in a farm field. Polychrome ordered the air-brakes slammed on and then she spent half an hour studying the youth (he looked no more than eighteen) through strong field glasses.

Why should this boy light up, if ever so faintly, against the surrounding haze of non-magicity? The rainbow fairy had no idea. She could only suppose — as she gave orders for the island to “hoist sail” again that it was the magic of contentment that he possessed, and even perhaps only for a moment out of time.

That was the first of many little flare-ups of hope to be followed by disappointment. Larger or smaller glows shone around any number of individuals sighted. Sensitives call those glows “auras” but they are no more than an effect of magic influence. The watchers observed people basking in the magic of success, the magic of achievement, the magic even of rare good health. And of course countless were those who were suffused in the magic of love.

It occurred to Polychrome that if all the magic the Shaggy Man could show was a tiny stolen magnet he might come in a very poor thousandth in the magic-demonstrating stakes. She began to worry that her great quest would after all be vain.

She needn't have worried. They were retracing for the fourth time the road between Princess Dorothy's uncle's farm and the town of Butterfield when a really bright glow lit up the magicometer in the pilot's cabin.

Word was flashed to the look-outs topside and everybody rushed to the grass verges to peer over. Sure:t half a mile below a tiny dot shone like a minuscule star on the evening road. “Something *very* magic is there,” announced the Rainbow's daughter. “Does anyone volunteer to go down and see what it is?”

“That'll be me,” stated the roseate kangaroo matter-of-factly. Since her own ascension to the island by magic means that form

of transportation had no terrors for Mar. Polychrome waved her wand and in a moment the great marsupial waved her tail in a wheat field. A few leaps and bounds and she was at the side of the thing that glowed with magic. It was a funny little toy dog, apparently made of china.

“It was that dog,” stated the Shabby Man. They were all (as many as could crowd in) sitting about in the hut of the girl ruler of the Pinks. Refreshments had been passed round and they were trying to catch up on all the ins and outs of this affair that had remained more or less mysterious to those involved (as well, no doubt, as to the reader—and certainly to the writer). “The dog was the cause of all my troubles these last few days and also, of course, the solution to them.”

“How fascinating!” said Polychrome the Rainbow’s Daughter adoringly. “How do you mean?” The small ceramic pug dog in question stared goggle-eyed and expressionless, scarcely pleased to hear that in his short living life he had been the cause of troubles.

“Ever since my arrival at Miss Gulch’s I had been feeling very bucked,” related Shag colloquially. “The moment she opened her door and I saw a white cat leap from her shoulder I guessed I’d found Eureka and my quest had been crowned with success. I could linger there in an expansive mood because all I had to do really was to grab the cat at noon any day, hold up my magnet (or not—in case Penelope had accepted it back), and Ozma would see us in the Magic Picture and transport us safe home to Oz.

“I felt so ‘bucked’ indeed that I thought I’d give a treat to our after all genial hostess—who was now to be deprived of the cat I learned she had come to be fond of. When Almira Gulch began on her magic spells I knew they were doomed to failure. After all, what corner theatrical-props vendor in America actually has any *real* magic for sale?

“I decided to insure success for her. At the crucial moment I swallowed my ration of a single wishing pill provided by the Good Witch Glinda and wished Toby here into life.

“But I shouldn’t have done that. Not that I begrudge you life, old chap—” Here the Shabby Man stroked the pug’s shiny head. “—but unbeknownst to me that pill was now the only way I had of getting back to Oz. I had no idea that, as you tell me now, all the outer world had, for Oz, been blotted out by the two-way work-

ing of the invisibility spell and Ozma couldn't see me in the Magic Picture or aim any magic at me.

"Imagine the violence of my gradually dawning horror. In a mood of confidence and high spirits I had wantonly dashed my hope of everything I now valued in life. I'm afraid I did poor Miss Gulch a great unkindness in turning away so abruptly there and making off. Perhaps we ought to try to send her some kind of consolation...?"

"If I had any thoughts outside my despair it was to make my way back west again to where the Oz continent had halted the time I came back to America. But what a vain—well, you couldn't even call it a 'hope'.

"I still don't understand. How did you find us? what with all these complications of invisibility..."

"It was Toby!" crowed Miss Polychrome joyously. "We knew finding you wasn't going to be easy—and we *have* been weeks over it. First, the sheer vastness of the area we had to look over, and then, as you say, the strangeness of the magicity, which blurred outlines in a way that made it impossible ever simply to *recognize* you, no matter how sharply your features were etched in the memories of some of us..." Here the rainbow maiden paused significantly.

When she didn't go on at once the Shaggy Man looked up from his wondering attention to the toy dog he had taken in his lap. "Yes, Miss Poly?" he said.

"Well," the girl went on somewhat shortly, "—so we had to look for you another way. We'd been told that any truly magic object we came across would light up, to our eyes, in a special sort of glow, and so we were to look out for your famous magic Love Magnet—"

"But I was fully expecting to give that back to Miss Thacker—Mrs. Carmichael as she is now," put in Shag.

"Yes, of course," agreed Polychrome, "but if we located the magnet in her possession she could surely give us clues as to where you'd gone afterwards. That's why we spent so much time hanging—literally—around Butterfield. But it was all so hopeless: the

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magnet was so tiny and besides there was even chance it would be inside a house or a pocket. Things were further complicated by our astonished discovery that there was a great deal more magic of one sort or another abroad in America than we had ever dreamed of. We had thought that *any* thing we saw glowing magically in that area of Kansas was going to be you, but far from it. So you see, without Toby, who's *all* magic, glowing away then like a little powerhouse, we'd probably never have located you."

The little china dog looked up in the Shabby Man's eyes as if to say nothing at all but just to indicate that it was ready to receive further caresses for its unique contribution. It got them.

Eureka, bored by the adulation another was receiving, stalked out of the hut and sought a different, more amusing scene. Polychrome carried on chatting up her adored one. "But what luck, too, that you all were so much out of doors. I'm afraid even the most potent magic doesn't glow right through house walls."

"Mm." Now that his hash was settled to his liking and the main heads of his mystification satisfied, Shag began to lose interest in the conversation. But gosh, Polychrome still had oodles to say: She wanted to emphasize that not only was she the director pro tem of this aerial island and architect of the rescue mission but also a graduate of two institutions of higher learning—if Queen Lurline's seminary on the grass could also be so designated and by now a powerful adept of magic in her own right. For that she would need more time. She proposed a stroll.

"I guess that'll be all right," the man acquiesced casually. Good heavens! he ought to be all fire and flame at such an opportunity!

Some of the on-listeners followed at a respectful distance. Others faded away as the reunited rainbow maiden and the Shaggy Man stepped out of the hut and proceeded along the one long spiral street of the Pink City.

"Yes, you see," began Polychrome confidentially, "you made a great impression on me when we met before on the road to Oz."<sup>§</sup>

"Oh, shucks," demurred her modest companion, "that was

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§ See the book of the same name. Editor's note.

nothing. I do that to all the girls, *and* fellows. It's no credit to me. It's just the Love Magnet."

"Oh, indeed, that isn't so," protested Poly, not to be reasoned out of her devotion. "Your great worldly wisdom—from all you've seen and experienced in your travels—

"If you mean sleeping in barns and lofts on three continents," pooh-poohed the Shabby Man, keeping up a running obligation on the girl's remarks.

"Your splendid singing voice—"

"I can warble a few tunes off key."

"Your brilliance as a linguist and navigator and cook and plumber and—oh, I don't know what all—"

"What's going on here, Miss Poly?" the man broke in, obviously not even listening. They had come to a medium-sized plaza that interrupted the long slim sinuosity of the street. In the rosy water of the central fountain a group of Pinks, with shouts and laughter, were dunking a furiously clawing and spitting Eureka.

"Oh, they're turning her pink," dismissed Polychrome. "It's their way of welcoming visitors. Watch out; it'll be your turn soon. Never mind. When you step off the island at last I'll turn everybody back to his natural color."

"You were saying...?" recalled the Shaggy Man.

But now, little by little, the penny was starting to drop for Polychrome. She made one final bid to get her message across. "Nevertheless—in spite of your disclaimers—I *was* impressed by you. At home on the rainbow I could think of nothing but you. I couldn't imagine that you, so young yet learned, could care for a thousand-year-old woman like me without a thought in her head. So I detmined to come to earth and get myself a proper education. So as to be worthy of you, you see..."

The Shaggy Man stood still and looked at her; offered his hand for the lovely girl to shake. "That was mighty nice of you, Miss Poly," he said. But Poly supposed—or did she, really?—that he meant much more.

As they walked onward again the man said: "By the way; back at the Emerald City, how's Princess Dorothy getting on?"



Sky Island latched on to a proper tailwind and in not too long a time it had made the transit back to the skies over Oz again. Mr. Tinker “anchored” the island above the Palace of Magic at the Emerald City and all the rescued foreigners aboard made ready for their descent. The Pinks were sorry to see them go; they had had fun teasing them. They were also a little miffed to see each departing guest lose his pink coloring at the moment that he accepted from Ruler Pro Tom Polychrome a little magic parasol, under which he floated down to the great tree- and statue-populated mall in front of the royal palace. There a cheering throng was gathered to witness the arrival.

All except one. When it came time for a pink parasol to be strapped to her waist, Eureka the cat said, “Miss Rainbowsdaughter, would you be a sport and let me stay pink? It’s always been a favorite color of mine. It’s so distinguished. White cats are a dime a dozen but how often do you run up against a pink one? I’ve found it doesn’t hurt, being pink. Besides, it’ll remind Dorothy of our fun and games in Mangabooland, where I was briefly this color once before.”<sup>§</sup>

“Very well, Eureka,” said a sadder and ultimately wiser Polychrome. Losing one’s illusions of love makes one very wise indeed.

“Oh, and while you’re at it, my dear,” further required the forward-seeing cat, “would you make me a kitten again? Dorothy used to be quite fond of me when I was a kitten. Maybe she’ll stop forgetting all about me whenever she can, if I’m a cute kitten again.”

Such a prestidigitation was nothing for Polychrome with her newly won facility in magic. Persuaded that the cat meant her request in all earnestness, the rainbow fairy complied. Eureka, the white cat, became Eureka the Pink Kitten, and as such was later to become even more celebrated in story and song.\* We’ve

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§ See *Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz*.

\* See *The Pink Kitten of Oz*. Editor’s. notes.

already heard one of her songs. There will be others.

And so they came down, down, down to the base court before the Palace and Princess Ozma welcomed all the erstwhile wanderers afield most cordially, although a little ruefully. After all, it was her own not very well thought-out idea for an enchantment that had brought about all these trials of exile.

She had the returning ones into the morning room to partake of lacasa—or tamorna juice for those who preferred that—and licorice cookies. All the celebrities crowded in after them, even those who couldn't eat licorice cookies.

Everybody rejoiced to see restored to them the Good Witch of the North and Professor Wogglebug and Prince Tollydiddle and all the others. But the returning heroes could not espy one they, in at least two cases, had been counting very much on seeing.

"Where's Dorothy?" asked the pink kitten, and the Shaggy Man looked very much interested at her question.

"Oh, she and her aunt and uncle *so* much enjoyed their trip around Oz that they've borrowed the red wagon and gone off again," reported Ozma, delighting in the fun she knew her girl friend must be having.

"Even though she knew we were expected back?" said Shag. The Ozward-winged island in the sky has been in constant radio contact with Fairy Queen Lurline and through her with the courts of Oz.

"Well, yes, I'm afraid she did," said Ozma, suddenly feeling awkward at her tactlessness.

"Oh," said Eureka and the Shaggy Man rather flatly. They both got the message loud and clear.

'Never mind,' thought the pink kitten. She had her pal, the complacent china dog, and the two of them could be off and find some fun corner of Oz where they could live and lark about and take pleasure in each other's company.<sup>s</sup> They didn't need any indifferent jumped-up American princesses. But there was

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§ See *The China Dog in Oz*. Editor's note.

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one question still in the kitten's mind. "Princess, am I going to be allowed to stay in Oz now?" she asked.

"Oh, I think so," acquiesced the little Girl Ruler graciously. "You've become part of the Oz pantheon by now. People wouldn't really feel comfortable not knowing whether you were safely in Oz or not."

"That goes for Toby too?" pursued the calculating cat.

"He's a charming little creature. Yes, he may stay," signified the princess.

"So much for keeping foreigners out of Oz," whispered Eureka to Toby with a smirk as they walked off. "They lower a veil of invisibility over Oz and right away we penetrate it and become bona fide visa-carrying residents. Some veil!"

But Queen Ozma was doing some whispering too. Belatedly she was realizing just how much she'd put her foot in it. "Poor thing," she whispered to the Shaggy Man, not sensing how much the epithet might apply to him as well. "Eureka's too proud to show it but I know she's hurt. It really was too bad of Dorothy not to be here." And then the queen was shouting—oh, but most elegantly and controlled: "Eureka!" she called. "Eureka!—and Toby! Do come back! You didn't wait to hear what I had to say." And when the animals came frisking back expectantly; "You didn't hear what room I've assigned you here in the palace—that is, if you choose to reside here. And you didn't hear the announcement of the big Welcome Home party in the ballroom this evening! And—er—" Hastily the princess ransacked her imagination for something that might particularly appeal to the proud kitten's pride. "—we have decided that this day shall be named henceforth in your honor!... And tomorrow shall be Toby's Day... And—er, the next one Shaggy Man's Day..." The little princess began to realize just what she'd got herself into.

That night at the ball, when further honors were distributed, the Court Poet put the cherry on Eureka's whipped cream with this:

*"Eureka sat on her haunches, alert.  
She seemed to quiver with intensity  
As she absorbed again the tale of Oz.  
'Twas still the games the air, the light,  
The pleasant sense of hidden mystery.  
But one thing there was different; then she knew:  
It was herself was altered, changed, askew.  
Her old form was now older, that is: younger:  
Eureka was a cat shaped like a kitten!  
She was transformed by her experiences  
She'd had to fend for herself or starve;  
There'd been the old witch with all her tricks,  
And the shaggy man who'd carried her away  
To the queerest island floating in the sky.  
Still, there had been a happy end because  
Eureka found herself once more in Oz.  
A cat inside despite her kitten size,  
She looked down at her paw in some surprise.  
Nor was her fur as white as once had been.  
Still that's the way things always were in Oz.*

*She pricked up her ears and ambled away,  
A fluff of pink kitten on Pink Kitten Day!"*

With the Shaggy Man things were more serious. He was in a very sombre mood as he went to his own old room and got out of his once snazzy Shabs and back into his glamorous formal suit of velvet shags. In a drawer which he emptied of a crowded collection of curios and mementoes he solemnly placed the inventory he had brought back from the Kansas farmhouse to please Dorothy and her relations. The potato peeler, the tobacco pouch, a hair ribbon! Would Dorothy ultimately be any more interested in seeing it than she was him? Into a crammed closet he managed to shove the Oz-map, suitcase and the magic ski-skates that had proven, in America, to be no more than very serviceable walking boots. From a cluttered shelf he took a comb to run through and disarrange his locks and as he did so he knocked an indeterminate piece of—what was it?—to the floor. Abstractedly he put it in his pocket. He was preoccupied about a conversation he felt he could not rest without having.

But it was far into the night, after the gay Homecoming Ball, before he found an opportunity to request a small private audience of Princess Ozma and she, the time to grant it. Then they met in her boudoir where they would not be disturbed.

"I have no one to talk to, your grace," confessed the Shaggy Man. "Not like Eureka with her Toby—"

"Who has?" broke in the young queen lightly. "I often feel very much alone. Whom can a fairy princess-regnant confide in?"

"Why, you have the Wizard!" exclaimed Shag, astonished to consider that he was not the only one in his painful position, and especially with regard to the Ruler of Oz adored by all.

"Concerning every question of wizardry and magic, yes, indeed," she conceded emphatically, "—and even in many matters of statecraft. But modesty forbids that I should ever embarrass the old gentleman by describing my qualms at being a boy trapped in a young girl's body—!"

"Oh. Your Majesty! I had no idea," broke in the Shaggy Man, really struck, even in the midst of his own tribulation, at having

to realize that a condition everyone blandly assumed must delight the fairy ruler was in fact a martyrdom to her.

"No?" said Ozma. "Well, don't be concerned about that just now. Please feel free to speak out. Only be sure I shall not be uncomprehending."

The Shaggy Man took courage to begin: "I guess it started when I stowed away on a ship from Portland," said he, trying to feel at ease in a jade and plush easy chair. Ozma gestured to an end-table box of ozberry dope-sticks, the innocuous flavor cylinders Ozites suck on in moments of contemplation or relaxation. "It was bound for Far Eastern ports, though I didn't much care where it was going. I was discovered on the sixth day out and they set me to unplugging the scuppers to earn my keep. We put in at Rabaul and Port Moresby and after a while we cut to Brisbane. I jumped ship there. I made my way in slow stages to Sydney, just after Christmas of the year.

"I'd got a job as a roustabout with a little traveling circus. I fed and watered the animals. Those principally consisted of a troupe of trained kangaroos. You can imagine how my mind went back when I met the crying kangaroo Marguerite on our tour not too long ago around this country...?"

"I remember Mar," agreed the fairy. "She was presented this afternoon. One of the victims of the invisibility spell, I understand."

"That's right, your grace. Nice creature." Shaggy smiled. "But what she, all unknowing, set me to remembering was New Year's Eve in Sydney. I'd just finished bedding down the jumpers after their gala evening performance. I'm a fellow that's always enjoyed public festivities like the Fourth of July and the Twenty-first of August—" here a graceful dip of the head to Ozma, "Labor Day, and New Year's Eve. I wasn't going to miss my only one of that last in Australia.

"I joined the crowd milling slowly along toward the harbor. About eleven-thirty the slow movement stopped. We were stuck, just short of a quayside plaza where you could tell by the set-pieces that fireworks were going to be let off at midnight.

"I came to stand behind an elderly man and a little girl. The

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latter soon caught my attention. I'm afraid they always do." The speaker looked abashed. "Like the man that wrote *Alice in Wonderland*, so I've heard. Well, maybe not *quite* like him. I couldn't help overhearing their talk—and then I fell like never before. I hadn't yet even seen her, full-face, but the sprightliness, the charm, of her forthright innocent remarks made my heart turn over. Maybe nostalgia had something to do with it too: her American speech. I listened—eavesdropped, if you will—raptly. I couldn't get over the impression. And fortunately I was trapped for at least another forty-five minutes. Every remark of hers that reached my ears was engraved on my memory and I soon knew what her name was, and that of her uncle, and where they lived in America, and how long they planned to remain in Australia... You will have guessed who I had found."

"I will have guessed," said Ozma.

"We never spoke. I doubt that Dorothy was ever aware of my presence in her close proximity for an hour that magic midnight." The Shaggy Man waxed lyrical. "The fireworks? I hardly remember what they were like. I was only aware of her.

"I never saw her again in Australia. As for the white kitten, I have no idea if it was before or after that that the two got together. I've never told Dorothy I 'knew' her all that long time ago, but in fact she had given me a goal. When I finally made my way back to the States I took the Kansas farm for my destination.

"That too was an amazing coincidence: Butterfield and the farm lying so near each other. For me, the adventure that brought us to Oz had its climax at its very beginning! The rest has been 'happily ever after' as far as I'm concerned. Well, not completely happy. As you know, my long-dead conscience was brought back to life and I had no peace 'til I tried to make good one or two transgressions from my earlier life."

"You came through with flying colors, I think," said the little queen, "although you had need of a little assist here and there. But now, dear Shaggy, what is your problem?"

"Am I right to stay in Oz?!" broke out the old fellow with a cry from the heart. "Dorothy cares nothing for me. It's evident now.

And why should she? Mine is a love that dare not speak its name. The whole world would cry out with disgust if it knew — not least the pure young princess herself. Nothing can ever come of it. It will be suffering for me not ever to be able to speak — yet worse, for everyone, if I ever did dare name my devotion. What am I to do, your highness? Please advise me!”

“You’re not the only one,” said the beautiful fairy girl, with just a hint of mocking bitterness.

The Shaggy Man stared. “What do you mean, your grace?”

“Even fairies can love” stated the princess. “Did it never occur to you to wonder what some of the rest of us are feeling?”

The man quite stuttered in his astonishment.

“Why — but... but you love Dorothy, of course. Everyone does. And she loves you! I’ve seen the signs. Why, she’s crazy about you.”

“A schoolgirl crush,” almost dismissed Ozma. “honest and true — for as long as it lasts. But she’ll grow out of it as she grows up.”

“As’?” queried Shag, not missing a word. “Don’t you mean ‘if’? This is Oz. Dorothy may never grow up. In fact I’m sure I’ve heard already that she’s decided not to. Her schoolgirl crush, as you call it, could last forever.”

“A most unnatural state of affairs — which could change from one day to the next whenever she should decide to begin to age. But I may never age, and here I am, stuck in a devotion quite as strong and as hopeless as yours. So stay around, Shaggy; we’ll be company for each other in our misery,” laughed the fairy — with only the tiniest undertone of despair in her voice.

“What do you mean, your grace?” repeated the Shaggy Man, forgetting he had been all set never to shock anybody and now shocked himself.

“Did you think ours was just a mild arms-about-waists girl chumship?” asked the princess. “It is such stronger than that, from my side.”

“But you — are two girls!” blurted Shag, hating to believe.

“One of us is,” countered the queen. “As for myself, I was born



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a female—so I’m told. And I have been returned to that condition. But I grew up a boy! Psychologists are beginning to teach us that attitudes and ways of thinking acquired in childhood never change. I shall always think and feel—but with luck won’t always act—like a male.

“Seen from that viewpoint, my emotions concerning Dorothy are not unnatural. She is my ideal.”

“Oh, your highness...” The Shaggy Man gave a long sigh. Now he knew he would not be leaving Oz. In his love he was not totally alone. He and the Queen would share a secret—and never speak of it.

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

Sky Island hung over the Emerald City of Oz all night. Polychrome had her adieux to take of various of the peculiar Pinks who had become her friends, or at any rate her near acquaintances, in these weeks aboard the island. But at daybreak she made her departure amid a chorus of exhortations for her to visit the Sky Islanders again whenever she liked; they would always value her counsel.

Bright and early she was at Ozma's palace gate. The green-whiskered army of Oz let her in and accompanied her to the queen's bedchamber. "Why, Poly!" said that dignitary as she struggled into her peignoir, a little groggy after her late night's deep talk with the Shaggy Man. "Here, sit on the edge of the bed. Omby Amby!" she called out to the antechamber. "Tell Jellia to bring breakfast tea—or dewdrops—for two in here... Thanks."

"Forgive me for calling so early, Your Majesty, said the Rainbow's daughter. "I have a boon to a of you."

"Boon away," commanded Ozma jocularly.

First Poly had to explain the purpose of her boon. 'The long tale of her infatuation, her exertions to become worthy of her love, and her ultimate, off-hand, scarcely comprehending rejection came out.

"Oh, Polychrome, my dear," cried the princess. "You too? This is old-home week for unrequited loves—" and then she found she'd tripped herself into a necessity of revealing the range and depth of that same Shaggy Man's devotion to Princess Dorothy. Of the torch she herself was carrying she dared, of course, say nothing.

"Yes, I realized that, your grace," said Poly solemnly. "Little remarks he let drop. I wish the princess well of his affection. Thank fays! I didn't blurt out to him more than I did. It was embarrassing enough as it was."

"Imagine," mused the surprised queen. "Shaggy said nothing of all that to me."

"He wouldn't," said Polychrome bitterly. "Just the same, he

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knows. And I can't live with the awareness of that knowledge. That's the boon I would ask, your majesty."

"What is?"

"Will you cast a fairy spell and make the Shaggy Man forget he ever laid eyes on me?"

"Why, you can do that yourself, my dear," reminded Ozma.

"I know. But my request is two-pronged. I want you also to make me forget I ever laid eyes on him. I want that even more than the other."

"Oh, dear Poly... I'm so very sorry," mourned the queen of Oz. But she granted the request.

Afterwards Polychrome felt better and wondered how she came to be sitting on Ozma's bed enjoying mint tea and—wonder of wonders—cloud cakes!

"Wherever did you get them, your grace? How super," crowed the rainbow girl, anticipating again a slangism by some years. "Why, these are as good as I've ever had! Just like father used to make."

"He did," confessed Ozma with amusement. "Your sisters came to see me once—"

"Aquarelle—and Regenvlaag and Iris and them?" broke in Poly.

"Those are the ones," laughed Ozma.

"What in the whirl!" marveled the rain girl. "Whatever for?"

"They were worried about you, of course. They wanted you home! They had their lunches with them and offered me cloud cakes. When I raved about them they absolutely insisted I take all they had. I put them in the ice-box—and I see Jellia has been thoughtful enough to serve them now."

"Oh, it's true," declared Polychrome. "I've got to get home to the rainbow! Dad must have given me up for lost by now... Why in Oz have I been away from it all this time?" puzzled the girl.

"Don't forget there's been your studies," reminded Ozma. "I'm very pleased you've gone in for higher learning. You'll enjoy your knowledge now in future... and the friends you've made."

"Friends," mused Poly. "Yes, I remember a boy called Fex... when I first enrolled at the college. I wonder what ever became

of him...”

“Sub-Registrar Fex?” said Ozma, startled. “Why, I noticed him hanging around at the audience yesterday—”

“Fex?!” cried Polychrome. “Is he here? I want to see him!... badly. How strange...”

So Ozma let her go. A little later in the morning she looked out of a window and saw a pink and gold young lady in flowing draperies walking in the garden with a slim curly-haired youth in a student cap. The fairy queen of Oz arranged for a brief rainstorm to occur soon out of a clear sky—but not too soon.

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

Ozma was back on her throne again, ready for the day's work. Close beside her chair stood the now particularly attentive Shaggy Man, and Tik-Tok the clockwork man and Jack Pumpkinhead and the Sawhorse were also in attendance, just in case the queen should need some advice in an especially knotty question of justice or protocol.

First to come bounding into the presence chamber for an interview was the corrigible kangaroo, Marguerite Supial. She was in quest of a quest—or to put it another way: she knew she had left home looking for something but that was so long ago that she had forgotten what it was and she wanted putting back on the tracks by Queen Ozma or maybe even the Shaggy Man or anybody who might happen to recall if she had happened to mention what it was she had happened to leave her home in search of.

Since her descent from the clouds, where she had done yeoman service as look-out and scout in the Sky Island rescue operation, Mar had flitted the time carelessly with the wogglebug and the pink kitten and the china dog and other friends of varying degrees of newness. Now, however, the Professor had returned to his college and the cat and dog had stolen away on their (platonic) honeymoon and the Woozy and the Hungry Tiger hadn't a clue that their kangaroo chum had ever originally been looking for anything.

Mar genuflected and groveled and so on, and then launched into her plea: "Oh, Your Highness, can you help me find what I'm looking for?!"

"Perhaps I can," replied Ozma with a smile, "if only I know what it *is* you're looking for."

"That's the trouble, you see. I don't remember! I know it was frightfully important at the time, but so much has happened since that must have seemed even more important that it's quite driven it out of my head. Oh, dear, it would be awful to go home and not even know whether I'd fulfilled my quest or not." Startlingly the kangaroo burst into overwrought tears and put her paws to her face.

Then suddenly she checked, withdrew her hands from her face and stared at them. Just at that moment the quizzically on-looking Shaggy Man drew something from his pocket and held it forth for all to see.

"Would this be what you were looking for?" he asked.

"Oh, my stars and stumbling-blocks!" screamed the kangaroo. "My mi-, mi-, mi-..."

"Your miniature?" enquired Ozma politely, who was thinking of lockets.

"Your mill-stone?" suggested Tik-Tok.

"No. I think she's talking about her midget," put in the pumpkinhead.

"Her minaret, obviously," dismissed the Sawhorse.

Other courtiers suggested mistletoe, minstrels, minnows, midwives, minuets, mignonettes, minks, and mints, while the cacophonous kangaroo continued to stutter and stare, first at her mittened paws and then at the curious object that the Shaggy Man was holding forth.

"My mittens!" at last shrieked Mar and fell in a heap.

The others rushed to her and comforted her with rose water and at last the kangaroo regained both senses and calmness and said, "My mittens. Of course. That's what I was in want of and I started out to find Grandmother Gnit to make me new ones, but then I found I had to find a missing bit of Grandma—and then I got sidetracked. Wherever did you find it?" She turned to the Shaggy Man wonderingly.

"I'm afraid I stole it," confessed the not so corrigible ex-hobo. "You all know how I became a collector on a grand scale. When we journeyed to Fuddlecumjig I knew I had to have a souvenir of *that* inimitable place. So when I saw the old lady go to pieces in her garden I picked up one of them. Just one little piece of an old lady. I thought it would never be missed. I was wrong."

He held out the fragment of Madame Gnit's head, hair, and mobcap and Mar took it gratefully. "Thank you so much. Of course I don't really need her for mittens now since the Sky Islanders gave me these nice pink ones, but Grandmother will be glad to

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have all her wits about her again. So I think I'll be off to return her her piece." And she popped it in her pouch.

"If you lose your mittens again, Mrs. Supial," said Ozma kindly, "come to me and we'll look for them in the Magic Picture. Only, just make sure you don't lose them outside Oz," she finished a little hedgingly. There was a problem that would not solve itself for yet a while.

The courtiers watched the quaint kangaroo hop away down the green carpet to the throne-room door and then the little fairy ruler turned to her supporter. "You'll get a complete conscience yet, Shaggy," she said with an ironic smile. "Maybe even one that works ahead of time. And to keep you on the straight and narrow I'll give you this."

Here the princess took from her neck a green ozygium locket and opened it to reveal a charming three-quarters portrait of Princess Dorothy with abundant blond hair and a picture hat miles too big for her just clinging by no known means to the farthest-back strands of her hair. "When you look at this you'll remember not to 'take things' or fib or cheat or betray those who trust you or hurt people purposely or—" The young queen's expression went from lightly teasing to quite solemn. "—or ever try show too much the love you feel."



Mar the kangaroo hopped away home into the Quadling country, this time quite without extraneous adventures. It was about time.

She stopped at Fuddlecumjig to return to Grandmother Gnit her missing piece and great was the gratification of the old lady to be all there again. "But what's this, my dear?" she said, indicating a pretty green hair ribbon that now crowned the lace mobcap. "I do believe something new has been added."

"Yes, that's odd, isn't it?" agreed the marsupial. "It was there when the Shaggy Man handed it back to me. Must be something else he picked up on his travels. He's quite a collector, you know. But I think he's learning now to keep it within bounds. After all,

it's not what you collect with your hands that counts but only with the heart."



Coffee was on (I *guess* kangaroos drink coffee; anyway in Oz) when Mar walked in at home. Tronto had learned, through bitter necessity, how to make it. Indeed, in the interval of their parentlessness each of the children had become an expert in at least one dish and they could now feed themselves without a can opener. Meluel could make chocolate-covered oysters and Ophrid could do the elephant's-feet-in-aspic, Zelix's anchovy pudding was a household staple, and Plonch's popcorn soup was celebrated as far away as Bunnybury.

The casual kangaroo shook off the children's affectations of indifference at her return and went to her room for a lie-down.

As she stretched out on the big purple-quilted kangaroo-adapted bed, perhaps her fading mind called up once more the visions of the past to float before it: Queen Ozma on her throne amid the panoply of her magic court. Polychrome the Rainbow's daughter directing with skill and charm the movements of an aerial island. A little bid of woebegone wanderers on a Kansas plain. Herself, wandering as woebegone on an invisible desert. A chattering jackdaw in a high blue Munchkin tree. An alphabetical pronouncement by the Baron of Baroquea. Professor Wogglebug coming in through a doorway. And the trees and the grass in Grandmother's garden at Fuddlecumjig.

Then she rose refreshed and set about an overdue spring cleaning. First she folded her new pink handwear and then absent-mindedly opened the drawer marked "Handkerchiefs" instead of that for Mittens and Mufflers. She gave one look and then a shriek. "Great balls of fire! I must be the most careless creature in all Oz...! *There* are my mittens!!"

Lund

31 August - 7 November 1987