

CHARMED GARDENS

OF OZ



FOUNDED ON
& CONTINUING

THE STORIES

BY

**March
Laumer**



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This book is dedicated with love to Ruth Tuttle,
original of the Queen of Dreams.

With best thanks to Michele Dymond for a musical assist.

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by John R. Neill, © 1913

Where the Munchkins' land meets that of the Emerald City the grass is the richest blue-green in Oz.

Strange things grow in the lush soil and the ripe climate there: things seen nowhere else. It has been supposed that it was there that the wonderful seeds first appeared that started the odd saga of the Wooden Soldiers. On a towering green stalk the pods had just burst the night a wild storm blew through in the direction of Oorfene Deuce's lonely cottage. There too is the marvelous Fiddlestick Forest where Notta the clown and his friend Bob Up were treated kindly long ago.. But those are other stories.

I believe you have seen that countryside-yourself...? Could you really be sure when you left the Emerald country and passed into Munchkinland? In some parts, of course, the Munchkin River is a convenient boundary line. Behold: the grass on the Emerald side is brightest green while over the river in the Munchkin country skies are always blue.

It is a little world in itself. Nowadays in Oz no one remembers the time when (or if) great events took place there.[§] People from this corner are rarely seen at the court of the girl ruler Ozma. No one takes much account of territorial rights and sovereignty in Oz. This market-garden region is in fact an anarchy. Under the watchful eye of Princess Ozma none cares to seize the peaceful peacock-colored land and declare himself its overlord. Vaguely bounded, vaguely governed, vaguely populated, the area nevertheless thrives.

The lushness of the greenery does not, I say, belie the climate. This is one region of Oz where rain is frequent. It pours down monsoon-like for an hour or more out of almost every twenty-four. Given the rich soil, the result is a nearly jungulous profusion of turquoise-colored vegetation.

The area is about as populous as any other part of the Oz

See *The History of Oz*. Editor's note.

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hinterland. Inhabitants are not thick on the ground. A plantation or three: truck gardens to serve the appetites of the citizens of the capital are to be seen as you follow the yellow brick road, but even so you can walk for long distances and not meet a soul or see a house or any sign of human life.

And yet, if you had been glancing over a hedge by the yellow road on the damp morning of the eighth of Oztober in a year not too long ago you would have seen quite a procession coming along the way.

It seemed to be a crowd of girls on foot, each with a basket in her hand or a light hiker's pack on her back. With them were a number of curious creatures who might be termed "men", although they looked like no men you ever see in the world of everyday. One was a scarecrow stuffed with straw. Another was a tall lanky individual with a jack-o'-lantern for a head. The third was really a vegetable, although he moved along the road for all the world as if he were a human being. Those who have been to Oz before will recognize some of the party at once. But who were the young ladies exactly?

Shh. They're passing the hedge now. Maybe you can hear what they are saying.

"Do you think-it's much farther, Urtha?"

"Well, really Betsy, it's been so long, I'm not absolutely sure..." The girl's voice died away uncertainly.

"Don't worry, girls," spoke someone else with an air of authority. "I have the Professor's sketch map right here. It shows the turning just a little way on."

"But, Dorothy," said someone else quietly, "that turning is shown just past the one to the Fiddlestick Forest, and we left that behind ages ago."

"I suppose you're right, Trot," agreed the important voice ruefully. But then it brightened. "Oh, look, there's someone at last! Let's ask."

For the girl had caught sight of you peeping over the long hedge that bordered the road. You didn't have time to duck out of sight. Anyway, you weren't sure you wanted to, for by now

you had recognized the royal coronet perched on the yellow locks of Princess Dorothy of Oz.

The girl came quickly toward you and "Pardon me!" she said. "I'm afraid we're a little lost—"

"Yes," put in the girl called Betsy, "and it's coming on to rain."

"We're on our way to the Garden of Gorba so-called," went on Dorothy, "but we must have missed our turning. Could you help us?"

"Oh!" you said, thrilled at the encounter. "I'd like to so much."

"Well," said Dorothy after a bit of a pause, "where is it?"

"Oh, I'm afraid I don't know where the turning for the Garden of Gorba is," you said, with an awful feeling that the magic moment would be snatched away like a lost dream because you weren't immediately able to answer their question. "But... but anyway," you stammered on, "—as you say—I think it's going to rain and... and I can show you to a place where you can stay dry; and maybe they can tell you..."

"Oh, fine," said the quiet voice of Trot. "Do come along then."

So you got down and crawled through an opening in the hedge and joined an Oz adventure. You pointed, awestruck, further along the road, and the group of travelers moved forward confidently under your direction.

"What's your name?" said Betsy, looking at you curiously, and you told them.

"Well, I'm Betsy Bobbin," said the girl and then she introduced her companions. "That's Princess Dorothy, of course, and this is Princess Pretty Good, now Queen of Ragbad—but we all call her 'Urtha'—and we're on our way to try to find again a strange and beautiful garden where she once lay under an enchantment. (We want to be sure the bad old magician who held her captive has really gone away.) And this is my friend Marye Griffith—"

"But everyone calls me 'Trot'," put in the serious brunette girl.

"That's right," went on Betsy. "And there's our dear friend the Scarecrow, and Mr. Jack Pumpkinhead, and Mr. Carter Green,

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who's an expert on plants. Urtha was on a visit to us in the Emerald City and on the way home she meant to go by the old Garden—if it's still there. So we all decided to come along and keep her company, and have a holiday at the same time. Only now... silly things—we've lost our way."

"I'm sure it can't be very much farther along," supplied Urtha. "But it's been such a long time since I was there. Things must have changed. But you say you don't know it?"

"No, ma'am," you replied, blushing in disappointment at being of so little use to the charming-looking girl.

"Don't you live around here?" asked Betsy curiously.

"Well, no, not exactly," you replied truthfully. "I just happened to be there when you passed by. But I do know the country a little," you hastened to add, so that they wouldn't think you a complete ignoramus. (And that sentence, too, of yours was truthful. 'But how..?' you wondered.) "I'm sure where I'm taking you they'll be able to tell you all you want to know... I think."

"What place is it?" asked Dorothy, looking at her map. "Is it Baroquea—or Bottle Hill?"

"No," you answered. "It's just called 'Gardenia'."

There was a pause. "Just 'Gardenia'?" Trot asked. "Not 'Gardenia House' or anything?"

"I have an aunt," broke in Betsy, "who lives in a house called 'Honeysuckle Cottage'."

"No," you said doubtfully, and repeated: "It's just called 'Gardenia'."

"How funny," said the girls in chorus. Then for a few moments you all walked on in silence.

Having got acquainted with the young ladies, who, charming and friendly as they were, were after all just girls, you were now secretly glancing at the other three members of the party, who certainly were not the sort of people you meet every day.

You had heard so much about the famous Scarecrow of Oz that you could scarcely keep your eyes off him. It all seemed so queer: there he actually was, just a few feet away from you and

you could easily have reached out and touched him. Yet he wasn't just exactly like you'd pictured either. For one thing his costume wasn't nearly so shabby and wrinkled as you had thought from the pictures you'd seen. Maybe at the tail end of a scary adventure his peaked hat might be knocked askew and his knees baggy, but the party had clearly left the Emerald City no later than the early hours of that morning and the Scarecrow, who after all had once been an Emperor—or anyway Ruler of All Oz—had had himself turned out very neatly for the excursion. In the course of the many years of his adventurous life the ever youthful Scarecrow had worn out a good few suits of his blue Munchkin clothes. A new set had clearly been made for him lately, for his tall belled hat was crisp and pointed and his wellingtons shiny-polished—nor on the yellow brick road on this damp day had they grown dusty.

More to be wondered at than his hat or boots was the Scarecrow's blue suit. You'd always thought of it as being of some rough material like denim or even a sort of burlap. The jacket and trousers that he sported today were actually of a fine faintly shiny material like taffeta or sateen, and they were of a rich purplish azure rather than the plain flat blue that you'd seen illustrated.

In short, his apparel was much more appropriate now to a person of the rank and honor of the Scarecrow than the cast-off garments of the farmer in which he had started out in life so long ago.

Other things too about the man of straw were different from what you'd expected. You noticed that he was not falling down all the time but stepped along quite dapperly and briskly. After looking at him for a bit you came to the conclusion that he must have had a stiff framework, perhaps of wire, built into his interior at some refurbishing session in the past. It seemed sensible. The good old Scarecrow was always being called on to take a leading part in some unlikely and harum-scarum adventure, and it was asking too much of cloth and straw-to do it all without a little stiffener inside.

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Alas, these fascinating speculations were soon at an end. Here on the left began the high greenstone wall that surrounded the place called Gardenia and in a moment Princess Dorothy was calling out, "There it is, folks! See the gateway up ahead?"

The party hurried on—and with good reason, for the faint mist of rain that had begun was turning now into a heavy down-pour. You were nearly left behind as they scampered on to the gatehouse in the wall.

"Look!" cried Dorothy. "You were right!" she called to you, and stopped for a moment in the falling rain to point up to the round arch that crowned the entry port. "GARDENIA" it said in big flat blue stone letters against the greyish green of the arch.

But the others were of no mind to linger over the historic moment. They hurried past the princess and crowded into the little open-ended room under the arch, and you followed them.

"Take a seat," you said encouragingly and pointed to the stone benches on either side of the enclosed area under the arch. "You're safe from the rain here."

But "Oh!" cried Trot. "How heavenly!"

The others crowded alongside her at the wrought gate leading inward to a vista of misty blue dales and paid no attention to you and your invitation.

Indeed the scene *was* "heavenly". You had often come here, you seemed to remember; it was your beautiful secret place such as everyone has; and here you would stand alone, gazing through the iron-work gates on the view of sloping meadow: equally lovely in yellow sunshine or blue rain, with a round green hill in the middle blue distance. Blue-brown cows grazed placidly in the rain and there were round and tall-triangular and shaggy-shaped trees standing singly or in groups here and there as far as eye could see. The wetness didn't detract from the beauty of the view but seemed to give the scene a certain coziness, as you all stood safely in the snug porch and gazed gardenwards.

The rain had slackened and you were just going to say "Knock at the porter's door there," when Betsy cut you off by exclaiming, "Why, it's open!" and she pushed the wrought-iron

gate ajar and stepped out into the blue-green world.
Abruptly Betsy disappeared.

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c h a p t e r

t w o

There was tumult among the party of friends under the green-stone portway. Everybody cried out at once in consternation and *you* didn't know what to think. But you scarcely had time to think anything for in an instant golden-haired Princess Dorothy had again pushed open the gate, which had fallen to with a little click, and had followed her friend Betsy out into the blue-green landscape.

Just as suddenly she vanished.

Now the remaining friends were panic-stricken. But instead of turning accusingly on you, as you feared, they rushed like one man through the gate, leaving you behind.

Inside the grounds the excited newcomers found Dorothy and Betsy standing talking together quietly. The others ran to them, all crying at once: "What happened! Where did you disappear to?"

"What do you mean?" said Betsy. "I didn't disappear anywhere. I've been right here all the while."

"Yes, it's very odd," agreed Dorothy. "Like you," she said to the others, "I thought Betsy had somehow vanished, but as soon as I stepped into the garden I saw her standing on the other side of this shrubbery."

"You know," said Trot solemnly, "I had an idea for just a minute that that helpful person who showed us here might be some kind of fairy or witch and had purposely—"

But Dorothy had interrupted: "Yes! Where is—" and then turning to the gate cried, "There you are! Aren't you coming in?" She started back toward the open-grillwork gate and the others followed.

Dorothy went on talking as she drew near: "Come in with us!" she invited. "It's all right. The rain has stopped now. I think the sun is going to come out."

But you made no reply and continued to stare through the ironwork of the gate with a worried look on your face.

"How funny," breathed Dorothy. "Can't you hear me?" she

insisted. And this was silly, of course, because she had by now brought her head up to within a foot of yours and was talking quite loudly.

“Dorothy,” said Trot in awe, “I think our friend has fallen into a trance... so still and unmoving.”

“Yes,” agreed Dorothy uneasily. “It is a little odd.” She moved away a bit. “It’s almost as if we can’t be seen or heard.”

“Of course!” said Urtha, coming in her turn a little closer. “It’s an enchantment! We weren’t mistaken before, my dears. I’ll bet by anyone standing outside the gates we can’t be seen or heard or sensed in any way.”

“Oh, dear,” said Trot and began to sniffle.

“Don’t be silly, Trot dear,” commanded Betsy, throwing a comforting arm around her friend’s shoulder. “We don’t have to stay here.” She let go of the girl and took hold of the gate and made to push it ajar.

But it did not open.

The muscular sports-loving Betsy pulled and shook but the two wings of the blue-green iron gate remained fast. Then Trot bent and looked closely at the join of the two sections of the gate. She put a hand against Betsy’s hip and said quietly, “Don’t, dear. The gates are locked.”

Sure enough. A blade of heavy metal was seen to run from the lock mechanism in one wing of the gate very solidly into a slot in the other.

“We’ll just have to find the key,” put in the Scarecrow wisely.

“So you’re a witch after all,” breathed Trot, looking through at you in awe. “Oh dear, whatever shall we do?”

They all began to scream at you at once, but you did not react and presently they got tired of it and moved away and you saw them no more—and had not, of course, for many minutes past.

The Scarecrow, with his thoughtful brains, at this point took charge of the party. “If we can’t get out through the gate,” he said, “we’ll just have to look for another way. Come, let’s follow along the wall and see if there isn’t a place where we

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can get over."

But though the group walked along the length of the high green wall for what seemed hours, they never found a spot that was low enough to scale, or even a tree growing close enough to it that they might have shimmied up and got onto the top of the wall that way.

Fortunately the rain had really stopped. By the time the party of girls flopped down exhausted and famished, the sun was shining merrily in the bright blue sky.

"Let's have a picnic," said Urtha.

"What a good idea!" answered Dorothy, instantly planting herself on the grass and swinging around before her the faithful old basket that she had carried on so many adventures since the day she stepped out of her wind-blown cottage over the shriveling body of the Wicked Witch of the East.

"Come on, girls," she said, "let's enjoy ourselves. After all, Ozma will soon look in the Magic Picture and come and rescue us."

They all sat down in a row and spread out on the grass the provisions they had brought along. The Scarecrow and Jack Pumpkinhead were neither tired nor hungry but they took pleasure in sitting with their young friends and keeping them entertained with conversation as they ate. But, "Oh, where's Carter?!" cried Betsy suddenly.

Betsy was the vegetable man Carter Green's original friend at court in the Emerald City and she always felt a little responsible for him on the occasions when he appeared among her friends at the palace. It was a long time since they had started out together on the curious Adventure of the Hungry Tiger. They had always remained good friends and now when Betsy was invited to go with Urtha on the mission to her former vegetable haunts the little man whose every thumb was green had seemed a natural companion to ask along. But Carter had an unfortunate tendency to take root if he stopped still anywhere for very long. What if while they had all been searching worriedly along the great garden wall he had paused to admire some particular

plants and was by now no longer distinguishable from them?!

But Betsy did not have to worry long. Just at the moment when she realized the Vegetable Man was lost he was found again. The relieved party saw him come stumping toward them from out of a thicket of thumbtack bushes with his hoe over his shoulder.

"What a paradise this is!" he chortled, "—for me! It's one vast plantation of garden plants."

"I suppose so," agreed Dorothy placidly, eating a chicken-salad sandwich. She herself had noticed some petunias as they went along. "It's called 'Gardenia', isn't it?"

"But it's much more than a garden, princess!" said the excited Carter. "I mean, it's the quintessence of garden. Every plant in the world must be growing here—and even every plant in Oz! There's no end to them..."

"What have you found, Carter?" said Betsy interestedly.

"I'm afraid I wandered a little away from you, my dears," admitted the Vegetable Man ruefully. "But I was so fascinated. You know, I've already noted examples of the umbrella tree and the dama fruit and the useful travelers' tree and—oh, a number of others of the unique plants of Oz. It's almost as if someone had dreamed up this place as an arboretum and herbarium just for the purpose of exhibiting every species of plant known to Oz and the world. There are desert cactus too and date palms and Arctic cloudberries and even a few edelweiss, I noticed."

"Curious," said Trot thoughtfully, crumpling her napkin in her hands, "that we have never heard of Gardenia before. It's so near the Emerald City too."

"It's not *so* odd, Trot," demurred the Scarecrow. "You know the Ozite is a very incurious creature. It's not his nature to go exploring. Most country people in Oz scarcely know the region beyond the nearest town."

"Yep, that's right," agreed the pumpkin-headed man. "It took people from the outside world to do any explorin' and uncover most of the funny things in Oz."

"But," said Dorothy, "it's so many years now since the first

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travels-of exploration were made. Can there really be new places to find?"

"There will always be new undiscovered countries in Oz, Dorothy," said the Scarecrow sententiously. "That's part of its magic."

"Even so," said the girl, "I wish Professor Wogglebug would make that 'definitive exploration' trip he's talked of so long and bring us back a *complete* map of Oz."

"Yes," agreed the Scarecrow. "He was speaking of it only last night. Well, perhaps we can talk him into it as soon as we get back to the Emerald City now. That would be an adventure and a half: touring all the crazy provinces of Oz one after the other.[§] But," he went on, "you could give him most of the information for his map already, my dear. I guess you have taken part in more of the travels of discovery than anyone else in Oz, Dorothy," said the straw man. After so many years of comradship he knew just how best to flatter his little friend.

"Yes," said the girl complacently, and she wiped her fingers in the grass. "There were a good many of them, weren't there? Let's see: first of all the Adventure of the Wonderful Wizard himself. Remember those days, my old friend?"

She sighed nostalgically and leaned back against the bole of a great northern pine.

"Yes, indeed," said the Scarecrow, wiping a painted tear from his eye. "And never a cross word between us in all the years since. There aren't many friendships that last that many years!"

The other picnickers began to be a little fidgety as this display of sentimentality went on. Dorothy, noticing it, hastened to say, "Yes, and then there was your adventure with Jack here—and then Ozma's own adventure—"

"Oh, Dorothy," broke in Betsy, "I hope you all don't mind my saying so but Billina always says that one ought to have been called the Adventure of the Yellow Hen. Ozma actually didn't do anything but get turned into an emerald grasshopper. Some-

§ This expedition did, in time, take place, although, alas, not with the Scarecrow's participation. See *The Great Map of Oz*. Editor's note.

one else won the day by her cleverness in bringing about the disenchantment of all the Gnome King's bric-a-brac—"

"I wonder who that was," said Trot with a solemn twinkle in her eye.

"You're right, girls," admitted Dorothy. "But Ozma's so sweet; no one liked to say anything."

"Actually, she had her own adventure later. You remember: the story of the Lost Princess."

"Wasn't that the one where she got turned into something else?" said Betsy naughtily. "A peach pit, if I remember correctly?"

"Well—er," said the Scarecrow hastily, "there was your second adventure with the Wizard, Dorothy—in which you discovered all those strange regions under the earth..?"

"Yes," said the girl. "That's four, by now. Then there were my travels on the Road to Oz, and those of 'The Emerald City'. Our group really came upon some oddities that time, didn't we? I wonder how Miss Cottenclip is getting along? I really must go and pay her a visit again. I haven't seen her in years."

"The adventures came rather thick and fast there for a time, didn't they? There was your uncle and aunt's visit to their old house—and the incidents connected with the Careless Kangaroo—right around the same time. And then we had our adventures of the Patchwork Girl, together," recalled the Scarecrow.

"That sounds a little odd, doesn't it?: 'our adventures of the Patchwork Girl'," said Dorothy. "But that's how it worked out."

"You know, Dorothy," said the straw man, "I must confess something. I've always felt a little guilty about the way we took over that adventure and left behind the poor old Woozy and the Glass Cat, who after all were charter members, you might say; of that particular set of fun and games."

"Oh, come, Scarecrow," said Dorothy, bridling. "Our knowledge and experience were needed or Ojo might never have got his friends safely disenchanting. Think of the dangers on the road for that poor inexperienced boy and the wild Patchwork Girl. Why, some of them were so awful that the account of them wasn't

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even allowed to be published!"

"Oh, come yourself, my dear," returned the Scarecrow. "Have you ever known an adventure in all the years of our time together that didn't turn out well for our side? We've got such powerful sorcerers looking after us, how could anything go wrong?"

"I suppose you're right. Anyway, if you felt awkward at our taking part in the adventures that time, I for my part made up for it in the story of the Tin Woodman's quest later on. I felt so bad when I wasn't allowed to go along with you to look for Nimmee Aimee."

"Did you, dear? I'm sorry to hear it. But if it's any satisfaction to you: when I had my own titular adventure, it wasn't really my story either. Just as with Ozma in her tales, I was the victim and not the hero. It should have been called the Adventure of Trot and Cap'n Bill," he said, smiling at the quiet little girl on his other side.

"Anyway I got into Ozma's 'Lost Princess' adventure all right—" said Dorothy complacently.

"And later on I was in the Tin Woodman's."

"And then I again in Sorceress Glinda's."

"And I in the story of the Royal Book!"

"Yes, if ever a book should have been called *The Scarecrow of Oz* it was that one."

"After that we got rather neglected, didn't we?" said the Scarecrow a little wistfully.

"Oh, I managed to take part in the adventures of Grampa and the Lost King," said the princess, polishing her nails on her lapel. "And in the one about the Wishing Horse."

"And then we all went Ozoplaning together."

"Yes," admitted Dorothy grudgingly, "but there were so many people along on that trip you can't really call it ours." She sighed. "And those were merely some of the officially chronicled stories that everyone knows. If you count all the others that have never been properly written up..."

"Yes, as far back as in the days of the Wooden Soldiers,"

agreed the Scarecrow. "My, those were times, weren't they? And that business of the Underground Kings. It's odd that so few have heard of those affairs. We really outdid ourselves there."

"Of course they did take place on an alternate time-strand," said his little friend. "Even so, I keep hoping the accounts will be published. They really ought—Oh, but, good gracious, look!"

For the first time in twenty minutes the young princess gave a thought to her other companions. She looked around now to find them all sound asleep, even Jack Pumpkinhead and Carter Green, who otherwise never slept.

"Goodness me, Dorothy," said the Scarecrow. "We've been talking our heads off. What will the others think of us!"

"Good heavens!" cried the girl. "Scarecrow, do you see what I see?—or rather, what I don't see?"

"What is it, dear?"

"Betsy has disappeared!!"

When your new and oh, so exciting acquaintances vanished through the mysterious garden gates and were seen no more, you continued to stand staring in for ages. You couldn't understand it. You'd gazed through the gates lots of times and the scenery there was always enchanting and very much the same each time. Admittedly you'd never seen people within—but if there *were* any there surely you'd see them? But now these palpable individuals had stepped in—you'd *seen* them step in—and then in an instant they'd vanished—you'd *seen* them vanish! What could be the explanation of it?

You fell into a half trance (as you charmingly have the habit of doing) and kept on gazing through the gate bars into the turquoise depths of Gardenia for a long time, and then it came to you as in a dream: you'd better do something!

While gazing you hadn't been completely dreamlost. You'd been doing some low-key cogitating as well. You knew from what you'd overheard that the Emerald City was just down the road: walking distance for not *particularly* fast-strolling people. The Ozites had left the capital early this morning and apparently hadn't been much more than sauntering, up to the time of your meeting. The entry into Gardenia had been impromptu. You knew the party were expected elsewhere: at least, expected by themselves. By now it had become clear that they weren't going to make any immediate re-exit from the garden. What had you best do? Trot along to the Emerald City and alert their friends? Or go to this 'Gorba' garden they had said was near, and let people know there?

While you were thus dithering, the door of the porter's lodge opened and a kangaroo stuck her head out.

"Oh, hello," she said and bent to pick up the bottle of milk. "You waiting for someone?"

"Well, yes, I am—sort of. I was with some people and we ducked in here to get out of the rain. I know we should have asked you but instead one of the girls tried the gate and then

they all went in—and, well, disappeared!”

“Oh, yes, that’s normal, you see,” said the kangaroo. “That’s a charmed garden and all sorts of peculiar things go on there. They just disappeared, you say? They didn’t turn into hypogriffs?”

“I don’t... *think* so. What’s a hypogriff?”

“A cross between a hypocrite and a griffin. They’re very rare, actually. But I have seen it happen. One just never knows.”

“Knows what?”

“Why, what will happen. It’s never the *same* thing that happens when one goes into the charmed garden. But, changing the subject: are you in a hurry? Come in for a cup of coffee.”

“Oh, well, thank you very much,” said you, always polite. This was in the days before rudeness became a way of life and people would say to their uncle: “I just can’t *force* myself to say Thank You to anyone’.” “That would hit the spot,” you said.

You went up the three butternut-colored stone steps into the porter’s (portress’?) quarters. It was darkish in there on the dark day but cozy withal. You sat at a high little table beside the casement window with its dimity curtains and view into the gardens. The kangaroo called, “Tronto!? Do us coffee, won’t you? There’s a good girl.” A thumping was heard overhead and then in a room somewhere beside. “Tronto learned to make good coffee. It’s her one accomplishment.”

“Who is Tronto?” you wondered, courtesouly showing interest.

“My daughter. She’s the only one left. The others flew the coop when I left Quadlinga to come here.”

“Oh?” you said invitingly.

“Maybe I should introduce myself,” said the red marsupial, taking a big flower-painted tin from a cupboard and rationing out the cookies. “I’m the Careless Kangaroo of Oz. They thought I’d be just perfect as Chief Careleaver of Gardenia, so I gave up my home in the south and came here.”

“‘Careleaver’?” you half spluttered in some amusement.

“Yes. They wanted someone to be in charge of not tending

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the gardens or doing any weeding or hoeing or picking up trash or sweeping away fallen leaves or minding the gate or checking on visitors—and I fitted in just fine for that.”

“Those were things they did *not* want done?”

“Yes. They felt it would spoil the natural ungroomed look of the park if people in white coats with spiked sticks were all over the place.”

“I see. And do you not care for it all alone?”

“Oh, people are very kind about coming to help keep me from getting bored. My old traveling companion Professor Wogglebug will drop in for an afternoon and then we neglect the garden together. Or Polychrome the Rainbow’s Daughter. Or the Shaggy Man. Or Eureka, the pink kitten. Even old Grandmother Gnit comes up from Fuddlecumjig as often as once a year and spends a weekend with me.”

“How marvelous,” you breathed, thrilled to hear the names of those celebrities brought out so casually. “So I really am in Oz—and then some!”

“Why, of course. Where did you imagine you were?” snorted the kangaroo, refilling the cups.

“Oh, I thought I was in Oz. I just didn’t understand how I got here.”

“Aren’t you from Oz?” said the surprised kangaroo. “You seem to fit right in—that is, sort of. Perhaps you do seem a little—how shall I say?: dreamy? But where are you from then?”

You described your background in some little detail but remarked again that you had no idea how you came to be in Oz. It just happened.

“Not bad happening,” applauded Mme. Mar. “You’re not in a hurry, are you? You’ve got time to stay and have an Oz adventure?”

“I don’t *think* I’m in a hurry,” you returned. “I just don’t remember.”

“—because it looks very much as if you’re about to *have* an Oz adventure,” promised, or threatened, the kangaroo. “Those friends of yours have been inside an hour now. To judge by your

description they're some of our celebrities. If they don't turn up soon they'll be missed in high places and then I dare say there'll be some coming and going until they're rescued."

"Rescued!?" you cried. "Are they in danger?"

"Maybe not danger—though that's not precluded but anyway lost."

"In a *garden*?" you said, catching alarm for the first time. "But then why are we dawdling here? I must go look for them!"

You started up from the table. "It's probably against your custom, Mrs. Kangaroo, but could you possibly help? I don't want to lose *myself* in the gardens."

"Oh, sure," agreed the kangaroo. "As it happens I don't have anything else I have to do. Careleaving's a very easy job. But wait, I'll fetch a bumbershoot. I think that rain is coming on again."

She cleared away the coffee things and went to a capacious closet by the little entry-way. Indeed it was a "bumbershoot" she took: not any prim little parasol or unassuming umbrella but a great big durable domed rubber-covered rainresistor that looked as if it might easily double as a boat in a pinch. Mar opened it out to demonstrate. (But in a house!; that's bad luck, they say.)

She called upstairs to the invisible Tronto. "I'm going out and I may be some little time." Haunted words.

Then she laid a motherly paw on her guest's arm and together they left the little house. Mar took a ring of big keys from a hook outside the door.

"But the gate's not locked," you remembered.

"Not to get in, no," admitted the kangaroo. "It may be a different story, getting out. The garden is jealous."

A little tremble ran down your spine. You might be getting in for more than you bargained for here, you thought. But it was a rather pleasurable little tremble.

Yes, indeed, the lively red-haired favorite, Betsy, was nowhere to be seen. But before the friends could panic she turned up, running through a little copse of hazel bushes near them.

“Darlings!” she panted. “Do forgive me! I got so restless listening to you two reminisce—”

“You don’t mean ‘bored’, do you, Betsy?” asked the Scarecrow with a sly twinkle in his eye.

“I wasn’t going to use that word, Scarecrow,” said Betsy with a laugh. “Anyway, I sneaked away, thinking I’d try to find some other way out of this place, so I could be all ready to lead you when the others had finished their naps...”

The said naps were being finished now amid the little commotion of Betsy’s return. Trot opened her eyes and looked at the others benignly in a way that made them think she might only have been pretend-sleeping, but Urtha gave a good honest yawn and stretched her arms about her flowery hair that was of a fragrance and a lilac hue found only in the tresses of certain Oz maidens with a herbal heritage. The flames came on in Jack Pumpkinhead’s eye-holes again and he leaned over with a creak of his wooden-pinned joints to give a hand to Carter Green, who had grown fast all along the side he had been lying on. It took the combined pulling of the whole party to uproot him before Betsy could go on.

“Well,” she said, dropping down on the grass. “I got into this little hazel thicket right away oh, here’s a few nutsies for you—” She broke off and scattered among the friends around her a handful of green-twigged cobs. Foresightful Trot produced a nut-cracker from her rucksack and the girls got busy.

“The thicket goes on for quite a way,” Betsy pursued, “but as you get in the bushes change character. There are some very queer ones farther on and others with no character at all. I’m not sure I liked all the bushes I saw. But on the far side of the copse where it dwindles off on the brow of a hill I came on one that might really be useful. I call it the Advice Bush. Look!”

Here she opened her other hand and a clutch of pale green leaves with queer colored tracery on them fluttered to the ground. The others reached over and picked up examples.

"Live and learn," read Dorothy from hers.

"Never say Die," said Trot, looking at spidery red writing on the heart-shaped leaf in her hand.

"Don't give up the ship," read Jack Pumpkinhead.

"Stop, look, and listen," quoted Urtha.

"Hmm," said the Scarecrow sagely. "That's advice, it's true. But is it really useful? These are general admonitions that we might well have said to ourselves, but they're not much help in our particular present circumstances.

"Anyway," said Dorothy authoritatively, gathering up her things, "let's go look at this bush. It may be able after all to tell us something more to the point."

The party did as they were told and made ready to move on. Carter had been hopping from one foot to the other to keep from growing fast again in this all too fertile and fecund soil. He took one of Betsy's now empty hands and the two started off to lead the group to the Advice Bush.

The way through the hazel thicket tilted at first slightly downhill. At places they came into little clearings where they again had a view of the countryside. Again they would stand for a moment, enchanted by the prospect. The rich blueness of the grass, the grey-green hills that rose from the valley floor, the damp tangles of honeysuckle that festooned the branches of the shrubbery round them, those spotted cows which decorated the landscape—but always at a distance, never near them: all these things exerted a peculiar spell over the watchers. "I declare," said Betsy, "I'm falling in love with this place." Then she stepped on to explore it further.

"Yes, it is pretty," agreed Dorothy. "But of course we mustn't linger. We have our own business to attend to at Urtha's own garden. We want to make sure it's no longer infested by the spirit of the dreadful Gorbabrog."

"I thought Ozma took care of that," remarked Carter Green.

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"Didn't she, Dorothy? Wasn't he turned into a little brown mouse—or something?"

"Yes, indeed," assured the girl, "but what's to prevent a brown mouse from eventually resuming its status as a wicked sorcerer? Brown mice are as fully viable people as anybody else in Oz."

"I suppose you're right," sighed little Princess Pretty Good. "I can't say I'm looking forward to any reunion with him. Anyway, this garden's lovelier."

Now Betsy cried, "See! Here we are!" And she ran to a bright-silvery-green bush whose every branch was brandishing bunches of heart-shaped handbills.

The others crowded after and ringed the little fluttering shrub that stood apart from the other plants of the thicket. A leaf trembled to the ground and the Scarecrow picked it up. "Try me!" he read.

"With pleasure, little bush!" he laughed. "How do we do that?"

Another leaf detached itself from the trilling twigs of the plant and fell. Carter Green snatched at it nimbly before it reached the ground. "Ask me a question!" said the leaf.

"Where are we?" asked Jack Pumphinhead unexpectedly.

There was a moment's pause while they all waited to see what the shrub would answer. But it answered nothing at all. The trembling branches fell still and no leaf was dropped.

Jack reached and picked a leaf off the bush at random. "Look before you leap!" he read.

"Hmph," he said, nettled.

But, "Oh, Jack, don't mind," consoled Betsy. "Of course! Remember, I called it the 'advice bush'. It gives advice!—not general information."

"Anyway we know where we are, Jack," added Dorothy, but appended doubtfully, "—sort of. At least we know the place is called 'Gardenia'."

Trot asked a thoughtful question. "How can we get out of here?"

At that the bush was full of vivacity again and shook itself free of four or five leaves. Willing hands reached down to seize them. "Get busy!" one read, and another, "Don't waste time looking for exits!", and others: "Watch out!" and "Look for the key!"

"How funny!" they all agreed. The Scarecrow summed up their further impressions when he said, "The bush has very definite ideas about what it wants us to do. It just leaves it a bit vague how we're to set about them."

"Oh, dear, it's a bit frustrating, isn't it?" Trot complained gently. "It doesn't tell us where or why but only what to do."

"It's more like a command bush than an advice one," condemned Jack, now rather disenchanted.

"But I'm sure it means to help," insisted Betsy, who had been the one to find the bush and somehow wanted it to prove itself. "Let's try again: Where is the key?" she questioned.

A single leaf dropped from a twig. The girl read it out. "Hunt for it." Her face fell. This was a rude response to her trusting query.

But she looked at the little silvery plant again and felt reassured. The trembling had stopped and every little leaf was looking up into her face expectantly.

"Poor thing," said Betsy. "It wants to be helpful but it just isn't built to give anything but advice and orders. We'll have to phrase our questions another way."

So the excursionists stood around thinking, trying to invent questions that could be answered by commands: ones that would be helpful to them. Then "How—" said six voices at once. Then they all stopped and laughed.

The Advice Bush trembled once more in anticipation. It was "How" questions it wanted.

"How," pronounced Princess. Dorothy gravely, "can we best look for the key?"

"Go as far as you can," said the next leaf to fall.

"How should we go from here?" now asked Trot.

"Go down the hill and over the stream, then along the path to the right and into the forest," they read.

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“How will we know when we get where we’re going?” said Urtha.

“Use your heads,” commanded the bush.

“Have you any other advice to give us before we go?” said the Scarecrow.

The plant twitched all over and a big blue leaf fell off a lower branch. When the straw man it picked it up in his cotton glove fingers, “Don’t worry!” he read.

Yet after all you didn't step into the Garden that beckoned so. You couldn't have said why. After so many times of peering in, longingly, fascinatedly, surely you were going to take the chance of a guided tour with the very custodian of the place. It was only a wonder you hadn't tried the gates and ventured in by yourself days, weeks, months ago! (How long *had* you known of Gardenia and its allurements? And why did it seem that, really, you'd always known, yet only actually arrived here moments ago? All most puzzling.)

But no; you weren't going in. Not just now. You tried to analyze your feelings. Gradually it came to you, as in a dream—or nightmare!: you were afraid.

Perhaps it was the Careleaver Kangaroo's words: "The garden is jealous," that warned you. Was it like a great gorgeous flycatcher plant that tempted with its scents and beauties, only to snap shut on the unwary and slowly digest them? Or was it another kind of fear entirely?: a fear of loss, of regret, rather than of danger?

You couldn't be sure. You only knew you shivered and your weak and nerveless hand fell from the latch after the kangaroo keeper had passed in. You turned then and hurried out of the Gatehouse, along the road toward the Emerald City. That was it!: there *was* danger—and yet not to yourself. There was something uncanny about Gardenia and you had to hurry to the capital and explain the circumstances to the fairy ruler of Oz while there was still a reasonable chance of sending relief to the wanderers stranded in the Charmed Garden.

You wrapped the borrowed bumbershoot tighter and hastened along. By the look of those clouds you were going to be very glad to have that bit of equipment with you—and at no distant hour either.

Your sensible shoes thumped on the yellow bricks. You bent down once to touch a yellow brick. Just imagine: *you* were walking over the celebrated Yellow Brick Road of Oz. Oddly, it felt as

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a sort of relief to you to note that the paving blocks were the color of real yellow bricks: a kind of dingy grey-white yellow. That made it, as it were, more genuine, more believable to you, than would have been the case with butter- or even egg-yolk-yellow bricks as in a certain film (which, admittedly, never looked “real” in a single frame of its Oz scenes—not to mention the *gold* bricks that some seemed to think the famous road was made of.

As expected, you did not meet or pass any fellow travelers along the road. It is traditional in Oz that one never sees on the road any person or creature except such as are to play a part in the adventure at hand. That is what leaves the mental image that Oz is a relatively empty, unpopulated land. Thus, when in the green western distance you did finally spy—and even hear—a crowd approaching, you knew you were heading for a significant encounter. You got ready.

In the lead of the oncoming party of walkers, as by right of birth and rank, stalked the courageous Cowardly Lion of Oz. You knew him at once by the hair-ribbon in his mane. At his side paced what could only be the Hungry Tiger. Behind them crowded or straggled a live sawhorse, a woozy, a raw-boned old (real) horse, a mule, a blue bear (or at least its skin), a pink bear, two cats and two dogs, and an enormous—and very strange serpent.

You hurried forward with a pleased recognitive smile. The others did not do the same. When they noticed you hurrying and smiling they tended contrariwise to slow down and look puzzled. You obviously recognized them a lot more than they recognized you.

“Hi, Cow!” you called jauntily to the lion. “Hi, Hung!” The animals so designated stopped short and looked distinctly offended.

“Hi, Sawks!”—and then you realized you weren’t making a hit. After all, those creatures had been celebrities for a great many years and were grown stiff and formal and top-heavy with their own dignity. “Hi, Wooze...” you trailed away but the Woozy grinned an affable toothless grin and you felt reassured.

You took off your hat, opened and shut your umbrella ritualistically, and advanced, creeping low: a sort of ambulatory genuflection. This mollified the lead animals and the Cowardly Lion deigned to humm: “Do we *know* you?”

“Oh, no!” you hastened to assure him. “But I know you! From all the books, you know. And the film... and from my dreams. I dream of you all the time, though we’ve never met before.”

“I’m not sure we’ve met now,” objected the Hungry Tiger. “There have been no formal introductions.”

There was no neutral third party to do the honors but you told them your name, with many protocolistic gestures and courtesies, and hoped it would be enough.

“I suppose that will do,” begrudged the Tiger.

After all your exertions you felt a bit miffed and “I’m obeising myself as much as I can!” you complained.

“I’d rather you’d obese yourself,” grumbled Hungry. “Then I’d feel like eating you. That would make you immediately more acceptable.”

“Tige is just having his fun,” the Woozy put in placatingly. “May I ask: where are you bound for?”

“Oh!” you cried, reminded of your mission. “I’m glad you asked. I’m on my way to warn Princess Ozma. Her friends are in danger!—I think.”

“What friends?” huffed the lion. “We’re her friends—and I for one don’t feel at all threatened.”

“No, these others are just people friends,” you admitted. “Still, I think the Princess may be worried.”

“Not ‘til you tell her there’s something to worry about,” put in the sober Sawhorse. “If it’s Princess Dorothy and that lot you’re talking about, they only left the Palace this morning. They wouldn’t have gone far enough to get into any danger yet.”

“Oh, but they have!” you tried to reassure yourself—or rather, redistress yourself. You told of your fears and dreads and of the most unsettling view of things which you had jumped to. “I think they’re trapped in Gardenia!” you ended. “I’m sure one or two of them at least would have come out long ago, if

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they'd been able."

"Now, by Saint Paul, this news is bad indeed," stated the Lion solemnly, quoting Shakespeare and looking grave and statesman-like.

"What are we waiting for?" growled the tiger. "Let's go and rescue them."

At this the little pink bear began to cry and said, "What about Bamse's birthday party?!"

"Oh, drat, that's right," said the Cowardly Lion. Then he explained. It seemed the LittlePink Bear had come all the way to the Emerald City to invite all the animals at the Palace of Magic to a surprise party for his friend, the Large Lavender Bear. They were on their way there now.

"What's the problem?" dismissed the tiger. "We'll rescue the girls and then go on to the party. They're in the same direction." He brushed his forepaws against each other concludingly. (Admittedly, for this he had to sit down.)

"What about it?" said the lion, turning to the others, and he took a straw vote. The consensus was that the party of animals should indeed rescue the party of people. "And you," said King Rex, coming back to you, "will you go to give your censure in this business?" (still quoting Shakespeare).

"Er," said you. You'd already been through the routine of attending people to the garden gates, twice running. You somehow didn't think the third time would be charming. "I feel I really should go on to Princess Ozma and let her know," you parried. "But please! You can't miss the place," and you gave directions for finding the entrance to the charmed garden.

The animals easily let themselves be conned and with expressions of (at last!) esteem to you they hurried off along the road. You turned again and bent your steps (no easy trick) in the direction of the Emerald City, whose jeweled walls you could already see gleaming greenly on the horizon.

The party of Ozites in Gardenia set off at a smart pace—but presently slowed down. They all felt themselves falling more under the spell of the strange silent garden. (They never noticed birds. Now why was that?) Even with the sun in the sky (for the moment) there would come instants when the world around looked all one blue haze: a melancholy but bewitching gloom that made them dawdle and daydream.

It was an enchantment. But was it a deliberate spell to lull the intruders into forgetfulness, even fatal sleep? Or was it just natural enchantment, claiming them, leading them on, binding them with blue-green beauty?

When they got to the bottom of the gentle slope it was better. Here there were no ravishing vistas of blue distances to keep them dreaming. Here the grassy turf rolled forward under low lunch-box trees. The girls gathered a few of those fruits for future use, just in case. As the ground still trended slightly downward they thought the mentioned stream must be yet a little way off.

Presently, through the stillness of the lunchbox grove they began to hear a rustling and a rushing. Betsy, always the most enterprising, pushed on and was the first to see the brown brook with its blue highlights rippling past. “Ooh,” she exclaimed, delighted, and knelt to refresh herself at the stream, after the meal and the run they had had. But “Phoo!!” she cried and jumped back from the bank. “It’s whisky!” With the back of her hand she wiped her mouth as if it burnt.

Her friend the Scarecrow looked at her and at the brook with anxiety. He never ate or drank; he had no conception of what taste and flavor were. But the clever fellow was well-read, and now he said, “You may be mistaken, Betsy,” and went on interestedly, “I wonder if it isn’t, rather, brandywine! I’ve heard of a river like that—but I had no idea it flowed through Oz!”

“Good gracious!” ejaculated Princess Dorothy, scandalized. “To think of Ozma allowing such a thing to exist in Oz.”

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“Why so, my dear?” said the thoughtful stuffed man. “Spirits can be a helpful thing to man—in emergencies. In time of exposure or exhaustion human lives have been saved by a swallow of distilled spirits. It’s only when use of them is overdone that they become a danger—and of what may that not be said?! Anyway, Ozma knows most of her subjects are too sensible to overdo, whatever it might be.”

“I’m not sure,” said Dorothy, unreconciled. “I’ve always heard that liquor is sinful and wicked.”

“A prejudice handed down from a time when everything was black or white,” said the Scarecrow sententiously. “A new age has dawned now. When knowledge and truth take the place of ignorance and superstition, our splendid Oz, best of all fairylands, must not lag behind,” he pronounced, veering dangerously near an excursion into metaphysics.

“But tell us,” said sensible Trot, homing to divert the two friends who had not differed in all these years but who seemed today to be often coming perilously close to it, “how do you think we’re to get over the stream?”

“Yes!” said Betsy with a laugh. “Somehow I don’t much like the idea of even wading through whisky. I wonder,” she mused on: “if it would burn your feet like it burns the mouth!”

“The advice bush forgot to advise us on that point,” said somebody. “Just ‘over the stream’, it said.”

“It said ‘over’, not ‘through’,” said Dorothy with logic, “so there must be a bridge somewhere.”

“Right you are, my dear,” said the Scarecrow, glad to be in agreement with his old friend. “Let’s look for the ‘Brandywine bridge’. You and I’ll go left, Dorothy, and Jack, you come with us. The rest of you can go the other way, and whoever finds the crossing first, sing out, and the others will join them.”

The proposal was followed. The trio for the left walked along the brook as it meandered through a wirewood copse and had just lost sight of the others when they heard voices calling. “Oh, that was quick,” said Dorothy, turning. “Let’s go back. They’ve found it.”

The three hurriedly retraced their steps, went on past where they had parted from their friends, and then around another bend in the stream saw a graceful little bridge of brown blown glass.

The span was no more than three yards long but sufficient to carry one dry-shod over the Brandywine. It arched prettily in Japanese fashion. There was a trellis hand-rail along the middle of it to hold onto.

That was the bridge then. But where were Betsy and her friends?

Wait a minute; this was getting monotonous! Betsy had disappeared!

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c h a p t e r

s e v e n

“Now which—?” said the Careless Kangaroo, turning to you, but broke off when she saw you were nowhere in sight. “Now what—!?” she altered her question, peering about. “Now where—!”

She leapt back to the gate, seized it in both vestigial fore-paws, and pulled. No result which, by now, of course, doesn't surprise *us*. She bent and looked. Bolted. How very queer. She hadn't locked the gates after her; of that she was sure.

Never mind. She swung the big heavy-ring of keys off her shoulder and tried the proper one. At least “proper” as she had always been taught to view it. But now the key ran round and round in the lock hole and there was no hint of a turning of the tumblers.

How queer. Never had the key(s; she hastily tried all of those on the ring) failed to work before. On the other hand, never had she had occasion to try them before. The gates had always opened by themselves, with no locks; being locked or needing to be unlocked. That she remembered clearly. Or did she? She had *been* in the garden before. Of that she was sure. Or was she?

Now that Mme. Mar came to think about it and recalled that her employment was to occupy the porter's lodge and carefully not to care for the gardens and their floral denizens, she could not remember that she had actually ever come in past the gates before. The park took care of itself and she took care of herself and ran the gatehouse and received visitors and chatted with them over a nice cup of something—and that was it.

She swung round and took a look. That's right!: now she was quite sure she'd never seen the garden view from just this angle. Only from out of the lodge windows. Actually the scene was much more beguiling even than she had realized. Those blue-green expanses: how they beckoned, so like Schlaraffenland. Maybe it *was* Schlaraffenland!

As long as she seemed to be locked in, she might as well improve the time by exploring. But first: through the gates—

dimly, it is true, as through a haze—the kangaroo saw you start out upon the road, carrying the only umbrella too! But never mind: you too had realized there was something queer about the gates and you were going to get help. You couldn't get in through the mysteriously bolted portway and you sensed that your friends couldn't get out. Good luck to you! You'd meet again one days no doubt. So reasoned Mar the kangaroo.

Then she turned and thought no more about it and set off to explore. I don't know what she had in mind exactly. She hadn't herself observed the party of Emerald City celebrities go in and had only a theoretical notion, from your own recounting, of their presence in Gardenia. I don't think she was actively looking for them. If she was, she set off in the wrong direction ever to encounter them.

Mar leapt off to the right, attracted by a distant view of what she took to be eucalyptus. The way led somewhat downhill. Somehow she never came to the gum trees. She also missed out on seeing dama fruit plants, thumbtack bushes, or rivers of brandy. Instead, after a bit of a leapabout, she presently came to the broad Munchkin River at a place where it 'shattered' into a Danube-like spray of flat willow islands, among which the blue water flowed dark and quietly.

The nearest of the sizeable islands was no farther away than that a narrow causeway led to it, broken by swift river channels that in turn were bridged by rustic railed walkways. Over the first of these rose an arched trellis, making the effect of a gateway, upon which was inscribed in green-painted wire lettering the legend:

"Come back to the old isle where the shamrock is green and life is bright as in the old days."

Mar took a cambric handkerchief from her pouch and dabbed at the corner of an eye, touched by an intimation of romance. Who had composed those lines? she wondered. It had been done by somebody who surely knew the ingredients of romance: loss, longing, remoteness, and beauty.

The kangaroo had never lived anywhere where the sham-

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rocks were green (where she came from they were red) but she was suddenly filled with a yearning to see them “again”. Would the reality be anything like the dream? She had to find out. Even if it turned out not to be like reality, a dream remained: the most compelling thing in creation.

The kangaroo took a modest step forward. She couldn't help it if it was a muted leap; that was the way kangaroos moved. Now she was on the willow-railed walkway and soon she passed under the lettered arch. Faintly she could hear the breeze moving. But since when do breezes move in tune? There was a *melody* in this wind. It went:



All at once Mar remembered Yeatts' words that went to that tune:

"I am of Ireland, and the holy land of Ireland
And time goes by," said she.
'Come, out of charity, and dance with me
In Ireland'."

The marvelous skew grace of those lines. One didn't really need "charity" to obey such a summons. Humming the codas Mrs. Supial moved forward.

She crossed the last of the little bowed bridges and stepped upon the lush blue greenness of the island proper. Just then a wild scraping of the strings of a harp filled the air. Mar glanced

down to find that her brownish pink fur had changed in a twinkling to a light cabbage green. How extraordinary.

But there was more. She stepped onward—and really “stepped”, not leapt. Something had happened to her legs and she found that she could walk sedately, almost gliding. Furthermore, her hands (which now appeared down about her waist somewhere) were encased in white lace gloves and on her head was a tall narrow bonnet such as Miss Trotwood wore. About her shoulders lay a light pelerine. She was dressed for going to a tea party!, should she be invited.

Gnarled trees with dark green foliage, much like yews, obscured the view beyond the immediately nearest few yards of the path. Mar proceeded along the walk, which wound and wove invitingly. Someone was playing the pipes of Pan close by. Transparent gauzeous green fairies flew hastily past. The kangaroo got the impression they were heading somewhere important and she hurried after them.

The little brown road wound over a hill to a little white cot by the shore. At a little green gate she waited by the trellis and in a moment a pretty girl in green-sprigged muslin came smiling toward her from the cottage door.

“You’re just in time!” said the young lady gaily. “A minute more might have been too late,” she went on mysteriously.

Mrs. Supial followed her hostess into the little house, whose door opened directly on a large parlor room where ladies in dark mourning green sat about in attitudes of melancholy expectancy quite at odds with the sprightly manner of the lady of the house.

“I’m Mrs. Forrester,” confided the young woman in a subdued voice, seeming to have been reminded of a solemnity that was due. Then she led the kangaroo about, introducing her to her friends before showing her to a seat.

Now when Mrs. Forrester gave a party in her baby-house of a dwelling, and the little maiden disturbed the ladies on the sofa by a request that she might get the tea-tray out from underneath, everyone took this novel proceeding as the most natural

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thing in the world, and talked on about household forms and ceremonies as if they all believed their hostess had a regular servants' hall, second table, with housekeeper and steward, instead of the one little charity-school maiden, whose short ruddy arms could never have been strong enough to carry the tray in, if she had not been assisted in private by her mistress, who by now sat in state, pretending not to know what cakes were sent in, though she knew, and they knew, and she knew that they knew, and they knew that she knew that they knew, she had been busy all the morning making tea-bread and sponge-cakes.

When the next to last cake was gone and hot water been placed for the third time on the leaves, the maiden entered with a wooden salver on which stood small glasses partly filled with a clear amber-green liquid. As Mar took hers she whispered to her neighbor: "Who is it?"

The neighbor looked startled, put a finger to her lips, and nodded toward the doorless doorway to an adjacent room. The kangaroo drew her pelerine about her and tiptoed to the door. There lay the dark green oak casket resting on trestles: but when Mar ventured nearer she saw that the coffin was closed. Now she would never know...

She retraced her steps to the parlor door. Was she really surprised when she saw the room empty, the floor covered with dust, broken plaster, and tufts of thatch, the window holes gaping, and even the upper corners of the room crumbled and open to the sky, and rain dripping through disconsolately? Mme. Mar's ring of keys, left on her chair, was gone with the chair and all that the room had held. Never to be seen again, the visitor supposed.

Shivering, she hastened across the chamber and out of the abandoned cottage. The sun was shining greenly through the green rain but it wasn't enough. The kangaroo hurried to the shore and along it, still looking for that brightness of life as in the old days.

Then the cries came again.

The Scarecrow recognized them for what he had already feared before. In the wirewood copse he had had a momentary sensation that the shouts he heard were not halloos but cries of distress. Now he was sure.

"Quick, Dorothy!" he said. "Run on ahead. You're nimbler than we. See what the matter is."

The girl flung him her basket, now nearly empty, and dashed forward. The two artificial men followed as quickly as creaky wooden joints and horsehair-stiffened straw would allow. When they came to the other side of a clump of pussy-willows whose furry catkins were mewling plaintively, the two were just in time to see Dorothy fly at a host of brown, winged creatures that clustered so thick about the "lost" party that the girls and Carter Green could hardly be seen.

Suddenly the Scarecrow stopped short. He would have grown pale if such a thing had been possible. "Oh... oh!" he moaned, caught in a terrible dilemma. He *must* go to the aid of his friends but he *could* not go! Fire! was the one thing that struck terror to the stout heart (figuratively speaking) of the straw man.

From the hand of nearly every one of the winged creatures extended a burning wand: in fact, a long sputtering sulphur match that flickered balefully in the green gloom of the glen. The fluttering fliers were not ungraceful in their brown draperies and smoky hair but they menaced like savage dragonflies the scared quartet who had fallen, crouching, to the ground. As Dorothy rushed at them the creatures ringed her round and forced her to the brownsward as well.

The Scarecrow and Jack Pumpkinhead stared in awe as the air was rent with the shrieks of the demons:

"Oh, do try me!"

"It's great fun!"

"Everybody does it."

"Come on, be a sport!"

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"You want to be one of the gang, don't you!"

"What are you: sissies?"

"It's the grown-up thing to do."

"It's glamorous!"

"You'll get used to it."

"After a while you'll really enjoy it."

"You won't be able to stop."

"Oh, *do* try one!"

"Try what?" asked Jack of the cowering Scarecrow.

"I—I'm not sure," quavered the poor straw man. "But I have an awful suspicion it's the dread cigarette fairies. I've heard about those evil spirits."

By this time a couple of the darting demons had noticed the two men and flew swiftly toward them but after a glance at their construction were swerving away again disdainfully when the Scarecrow cried: "Wait! ... No, don't come too near with those matches!.. Who are you? What do you want with our friends?"

The sprites returned and hovered at a safe (for him distance from the man of straw. "I'm Emphysema," called one in a rough wheeze. "We are the cigarette fairies."

"And I'm Carcinoma," rasped the other. "We want these people to join us. It's wonderful among the band of smokers. Everybody should belong."

"Everybody who *has* any body," croaked Emphysema. "You're no good to us. You obviously haven't got any lungs."

The two dusky creatures flitted away again.

Carter Green, who had proved to be of equally little interest to the tobacco fairies, had now crawled away from the cowering group on the grass and he reported to Jack and the Scarecrow:

"We had just come in sight of the bridge when these demons appeared in the air from the other side of the stream and rushed at us. The girls didn't know what to make of it at first: whether the creatures meant to take us prisoners or to destroy us—"

"Both," said the Scarecrow, without further comment.

The others looked at him in fright.

But, "From what I hear though," the straw man presently went on, "it will take a little while."

The three artificial men turned their eyes again toward the luckless girls. Now they had to watch a pitiful scene. The young princesses and their chums were only human. Without *very* strong wills they were obliged at last to give in to the blandishments of these enemies who tried to put on the guise of friends. The four sat in a circle on the grass and meekly put between their lips the white tubes the sprites held out to them.

The sparkling wands were put to use and then the crowd of fairies rose in the air a little and watched with gloating eyes as their victims took their first tentative puffs on the cigarettes. Poor Trot began to cough at once and looked up pleadingly at the brown imps but these descended on her again with threats and she put the cigarette back to her mouth. The other girls were more fortunate. They were able to blow out big clouds of smoke without apparent discomfort.

"I don't understand," said Urtha though. She had a sort of family sympathy for the tobacco plant, but "What is the point of doing this?" she asked.

"Why, don't you like it?" said Emphysema in her husky voice.

"What is there to like?" put in Dorothy. "It simply tastes like burnt paper and hay."

"But you'll get used to it and love it!" rasped Carcinoma.

"Oh, there are lots of *pleasant* things I love already," resumed the little earth princess, "without first having to get used to them." With that she stubbed out her cigarette decisively in the springy brown turf.

"I guess I don't mind the taste too much after all," said Dorothy. "But Aunt Em says smoking by girls is sinful and wicked, and I don't want to do it!" So saying, she threw her cigarette into the nearby brandy stream where it flared in a blue flame and then was drowned.

But Betsy said, "I don't know, Dorothy. 'Sinful' and 'wicked': those words don't mean anything. They're just what prejudiced people say about anything they don't approve of."

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Tell me" —and she raised her face toward the hovering smoky-draped fairies about her— "if I smoke, will I get a lovely voice like yours?"

"Of course!" croaked Emphysema.

"And will my hair be like yours?"

"Sure," wheezed the sprite. Flattered, she brushed the fingers of both hands through her grey tresses, releasing a little haze of smoke.

"Will my breath smell like yours?" Betsy asked another fairy.

"Just the same!" sneezed Carcinoma.

"And my teeth look like yours?"

"Exactly!" cried the brown-fanged creature.

"Well, in that case," said Betsy with decision, "please let me have *all* your cigarettes!"

The delighted fairies clustered round her with shrieks of glee. They thrust into her hands, until they were overflowing, all the little parcels of cigarettes they were carrying.

"*And* your matches, please," commanded Betsy. "It's no use without some way to light up."

Gladly the fairies acceded and gave up their wands.

"And now," said Betsy, stepping to the side of the stream, "our dear Princess Dorothy has set a perfect example." So saying, she threw the entire armload of smokes into the Brandywine where they sank, sodden, in no time.

"Oh-h! Oooh!" wailed the sprites. "You cheated us! You made out like you were a friend, only to undo us in the end!"

"The very *same* to you, my dears," cried Betsy and laughed in their faces.

"Undone, undone!" croaked the cigarette fairies all in chorus, and, coughing and wheezing, flew slowly and sadly away.

“My dear,” (just fancy: Ozma of Oz was calling you “dear”), “what you say astonishes me greatly. A large and magnificent garden virtually outside the gates of the Emerald City? How could it have escaped my notice all this while?”

“It’s all very mysterious to me too, Your Majesty.” (How you enjoyed saying “Your Majesty” with capital letters!) “It’s as if I’ve always known of the garden and yet I wasn’t actually there until just lately.”

“And how did you get there? I realize you’re not an Ozite,” said the percipient girl ruler.

“Oh, no Your Highness.” (You enjoyed saying that too.) Then you gave your history succinctly. “But as for getting to Gardenia, it was well, like in dreams, you know? Suddenly you’re just there and you have absolutely no idea of how it happened but it all seems perfectly natural.”

“An enchantment, most surely,” conjectured the princess. “We must presently get to the bottom of it. But for now: you say my friends are in danger?”

“Yes, I think so. At least: they said they were on their way to the garden of Gorba—or Abrog? or Gorbabrog?—but now it’s getting on and they haven’t come back out of Gardenia and I think something may have happened.”

“There’s only one thing to be done. Come,” said Ozma. “We shall consult the Magic Picture.”

Heavens, what a thrill: to be going to look at that fabulous and famous work of art! You couldn’t believe your luck, and you made plans to take utmost careful note and see just what it was like. You’d heard so many conflicting reports that by now you didn’t know if it was a huge mural covering half a wall or a little bijou landscape one could hold on one’s lap, nor whether the painted scene constantly shifted or instead showed one steady view until called upon to present some specified person or place, or—most equivocal of all—whether things seen in the painting could also be *heard*. You thought this last highly

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unlikely and you were, in an odd way, gratified when Queen Ozma had invoked the spell of the picture and you saw the Scarecrow and Jack Pumpkinhead pushing their way through a pussywillow thicket, obviously deep in discussion but making never a sound that was audible to you in the Chamber of the Magic Picture.

"That's Scare-kers, my old rag-bag friend," chortled the irrepressible Patchwork Girl, one of the crowd of courtiers who had followed you and Ozma into the chamber.

"And Jack P. too, I trow.

I wonder how this tale will end.

I wish I knew that now."

"Why so, Scraps?" queried the Queen, bemused.

"Well, I'm going with you when you go to rescue them! That stands to reason" (though only the Patchwork Girl could immediately see what reason). "But look at that threatening black sky! It appears to me like it's going to pour—and I'm never much use in a rainstorm. I don't know if I'll be more use going along or staying at home."

"We'll carry thumbrellas, of course," stated Ozma, "so you won't get wet. Come along if you like."

"Yes," you seconded, thrilled, obviously, to be talking to the veritable Patchwork Girl of Oz, but possibly the least bit blasé after all the celebrities you were by now acquainted with? "I think that would be a very good idea. And the Wizard ought to go with you too! and Tik-Tok, naturally, and Uncle Henry and Aunt Em," you recited, naming every denizen of the Palace of Magic you could recall from your reading, without even looking around to see whether each and all of the famous ones you named were in fact resident here at the moment. Why were you so insistent?

"Wel—I," said Queen Ozma hesitantly. "It's just half an hour—by Sawhorse—down the road. Oh, no, pish!" swore Ozma genteelly, "Lignum has gone off with the others to the bears' birthday party. Why, the palace will be quite deserted when—I mean, *if* we all go..."

Quite so. But the throne could not remain empty, the sceptre unswayed. How you dreamed of swaying that sceptre! The dream made you bold. “Er Your Highness,” you ventured, “I could stay here and keep an eye on things until you get back.”

“You?” said the Girl Ruler in obvious surprise. And then, to *your* surprise: “Why, yes. I suppose you might. I don’t see anything wrong in that. Only, I thought you would be showing us the way.”

“Oh, no,” you hastened to demur. “It’s very easy to find—” and you gave exact directions. “I know everyone at the court will want to take part in rescuing your friends. Then if anything *should* come up I would be here and could always give a call to the Good Sorceress of the South. What’s her number, by the way?”

“Here,” said Ozma and slipped off with a dainty gesture her two-way wrist radio. “Just press this tiny knob and you’re keyed in directly to Glinda’s office.” The Queen of Oz clasped the bracelet round your wrist. This was almost *too* easy. You weren’t sure you wanted it to be quite that effortless.

You tried out something. “May I borrow your sceptre while you’re away? Your Grace,” you said, emboldened already to use the less subserving honorific.

Ozma handed it over meekly. “I suppose you’ll be wanting my ear poppies next,” she said with almost a joking pout.

You laughed delightedly at the sally. “No,” you assured, “those look much better on you... And now, I really think Your Majesty ought to be off if you’re going to make it by lunch-time.”

Everyone took amiably to this virtual command and they all flocked out of the Chamber. You followed and were in time to see Ozma at the vestibule passing out thumbrellas. These looked for all the world like an office worker’s rubber thumb-guard, but you heard the little queen explaining:

“Just slip it over your left thumb. You’ll hardly realize it’s there. But if it starts to rain, the first drops will activate the device, and it will blow up into a sturdy rubber umbrella and last that way to protect you as long as the rain goes on. As it gradu-

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ally dries afterward it will gradually shrink. Any questions?"

Scraps had one:

"What if I sprinkle it by hand?

Will my thumbrella understand?"

"Yes—and blow right up into a king-size umbrella," assured Ozma. "But that might be awkward if it isn't really raining, because you can't collapse the thumbrella by hand and put it aside. It will only come off your thumb when it's dried and shrunk back to thumb size again."

The warning was probably enough to keep the Patchwork Girl from doing any experimenting. Nobody packed any provisions for what they thought might be an hour or two's lark. You stood on the palace steps and watched them trail off by twos and threes across the lawn to the ornamental gates and soon they were lost to sight in the city's park-like streets.

Then you hurried back to the Throne Room and seated yourself on Ozma's throne. Gee, that was the quickest takeover bid in Oz history. Hastily you issued a whole lot of edicts but when the palace staff read them and looked at you with frowns of disapproval you speedily rescinded them. Right away you had learned the first rule for the wielding of absolute power: Never to do anything that will make you unpopular with the people you have to associate with daily. It's a horrible feeling to be obviously hated and to know that people only do things to please you out of fear.

“Well done, Betsy!” said the Scarecrow, and the others too looked at her with gratitude and admiration.

“But now,” said the no-nonsense heroine, “let’s get to that bridge and be on our way.”

They all ran away cheerfully to the little high-arched glass bridge and with Urtha leading the way put out their hands to grasp the hand-rail.

“Oh, look,” said Trot. “There’s a word cut in it.”

Sure enough, incised in the glass handhold bar, making a decoration in filigree tracery that ran the length of the rail, were the letters

M-O-D-E-R-A-T-I-O-N.

“I guess that’s right,” said the Scarecrow, looking down into the brown liquor that gurgled along below them. “It’s the only safe and sensible way past the dangers that may lie down there.”

On the other side of the Brandywine they found a pathway, as the Advice Bush had predicted, and the party took its rightward branch. The way led gently up through a turquoise-colored meadow dotted with up-trees. The travelers knew enough, however, since Bob Up and Notta’s recitation of the dangers inherent in such grasping plants, not to venture too near any of them. Consequently they avoided making their way out of the mysterious gardens by way of regions perhaps more threatening than the one they still found themselves in.

But the dangers were not trivial even in this periodically quite enchanting place.

As the group toiled up the slope first Trot, then Urtha, and then Dorothy began to yawn and to straggle in their march. “Come on, Dot dear,” rallied the Scarecrow; “don’t fall asleep here—oh!”

The straw man’s exclamation revived the young princess. “What is it, Scarekers?” she asked.

“Oh, nothing. This situation just reminded me of something... Dorothy, are you feeling *very* drowsy?” he demanded,

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a little anxiously.

“No, just average,” said the girl. “But it *would* be lovely to lie down and have a nap.”

“Dorothy,” put in Trot, “what is that sweet smell? That’s what’s making *me* sleepy.”

“Yes, now you mention it, Trot: I realize I’ve been smelling it too. It’s like—!” Dorothy stopped short and looked at the Scarecrow with big eyes.

“What is it, dear?” said her old friend, alarmed.

“Of course: you can’t smell it, can you, Scarecrow? And it wouldn’t affect you... *just like last time...*”

“Dorothy, you don’t mean—?!”

“Yes,” said the girl in awe. “The deadly poppies.”

“I was afraid of that,” confessed the Scarecrow. “Yes, it would have been more or less in this region that we ran against the poppy field that time long ago. Quick! let’s go back. Jack!... Carter!” he yelled at those two, who had tramped on ahead, unsuspecting.

By now all four of the girls were rubbing their eyes and looking for places to sit down. The Scarecrow ran to Urtha and tried in his straw-stuffed way to pull her to her feet. “Girls!” he cried in a panic. “Don’t lie down! We’ll never get you up again. Betsy! help me!”

The other girls, now thoroughly alarmed, ran to the Scarecrow’s side and in an instant had Princess Pretty Good, yawning and blushing, on her feet again. The fright of knowing there was insidious ruin in the temptation to sleep had aroused them all—for the time being.

Jack and Carter, who had reached the summit of the ridge, came back now, in response to the Scarecrow’s summons. “What are you waiting for?” they called. “There’s the most gorgeous field of flowers on the other side.

“That’s what I feared,” panted the Scarecrow. “We’ve got to turn back! Dorothy and I know the Deadly Poppy Field. The girls could never survive trying to cross it.”

“They don’t need to cross it,” re assured the two. “The path

runs alongside—and we can see the forest at the other end.”

“Come on,” said the straw man with authority. “I’ll reconnoitre with you. Girls,” —he turned “go on back toward the Brandywine stream. We’ll join you there in a minute.”

With determined steps the three men retraced the way up the meadow to the top of the ridge. There indeed the Scarecrow saw again, spread before him in all its gay allure, the rippling blanket of scarlet flowers that had so nearly dished the plane of himself and friends so many years before. He, stuffed and sewn and painted creature, unable to smell or taste or feel except with his figurative heart—could stand in safety, as could his two companions, and survey without peril the tempting trap.

“Yes,” he said thoughtfully; “just as I remember it. See the river off there in the distance?”

“The Munchkin River, isn’t it, Scarecrow?” said Carter Green.

“Yes. We had just crossed it, on our way to seek the Wizard—or rather, the others crossed, but I got stuck on a pole in the middle of the stream and had to be rescued by a stork... Just think: if we’d turned this way through the poppies instead of carrying straight on to the Emerald City, this strange region of Gardenia is where we would have come out.”

“That means,” put in Jack Pumpkinhead thoughtfully, “that this garden isn’t walled all the way around. We could walk through the poppies and so make our way out and on home again.”

“Not a wall but as good as a wall!” mused the Scarecrow. “Yes, *we* could do as you say, Jack but what of our young-lady friends? No, I still think the plan of the advice bush is quickest: to find the key and then make our way back to the gate quickly.

“But how are we to do it?” asked the Vegetable Man. “Far from crossing the poppy field, you say the girls could not even come as close as we are now.”

“No, but I have an idea. How are you fellows feeling? Fresh enough for a brisk trot?”

Jack and Carter glanced at each other and then at the Scarecrow. “We’re pretty much like you, Scarecrow,” said Jack. “We’re

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not all that *strong*—but we're tireless."

"I may wilt a little around the edges when I get too hot and dry," added the Vegetable Man, "but I never get what you might call tired. Lead on!"

"Fine. Here's my plan..." As the three again tottered down the slope after the girls the Scarecrow outlined what he had in mind.