

## CHARMED GARDENS OF OZ

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### c h a p t e r

### t w e n t y

As the trio of fairy beings stepped off the bridge that led back to the mainland, beginning now to look around a bit anxiously for some shelter against the night, they saw Jack Pumpkinhead come racking out of the wilderness.

"Jack!" they all cried as one. No one could fail to recognize Jack Pumpkinhead even by moonlight and even if one had not previously made formal acquaintance. There aren't many characters, even in Oz, whose frames are topped by a big orange fluted globe, and Jack had carved a fresh head, just to be on the safe side, in honor of his setting out with his friends that morning.

Hearing his name called, Jack's head whirled round and he kept on coming. The travelers' cries turned from ones of beckoning to ones of warding off: "Stop!... Jack, stop... oh, help!!" Polychrome fell to the ground and was trampled by the pumpkinhead as he galloped on in his boondockers toward the plank bridge leading to the blue island.

Siko Pompus' dander went up, his beard caught fire, and he issued a no-nonsense (magical edict: "Stop!" With one foot in the air Jack stopped indeed, frozen in mid-stomp. Quickly the nimble elf sprang to the stoppee and said tersely, "That's better. Stop this cutting up and come back and act sensibly."

The spell worked. Meekly Jack turned and followed Siko (energetically slapping at his blazing beard back to where the rainbow fairy was picking herself up, dusting herself off, and starting all over again.

"Now, Jack, my friend," said she, "whatever can be the matter? Why did you ignore our calls except to trample us? Where have you been all day? And most important of all: what's happened to all the friends who set out from the Emerald City this morning?!" She had heard all about this: from Mar, the Kangaroo, you see..

That same Mar was now the one to show most aplomb in the face of the present encounter. She just held out one of her

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mitted paw-hands, meaning to exchange a grip with the newcomer.

But the hand was not taken nor Poly's questions answered. When at last Jack Pumpkinhead vouchsafed to speak, he said, "Er...uhh...hmmm," and then capped that by saying, "Drrr."

This was unsatisfactory. However, two of the three fellow travelers had fairy powers, and soon Polychrome and Siko Pompus put their heads together, made a few passes, and produced a Jack Pumpkinhead who was able, at least for the moment, to utter sensibly:

"Wow, that was cold turkey! Thanks! Yes, it's been a bad case of opium poisoning but you seem to have cleared it up nicely. Let me know the name of your preparation—in case I should get off on another high. I can feel in my sticks I'm not thoroughly away from out of in under the influence even yet. I who supposed pumpkins were free of affectability by poppy fumes. But I guess if you've been lying with your head down among 'em all day long you'll begin to feel something or other even if that head is a pumpkin. I was desperate; thought I had to get help for the others and there was no way out that I could see except right through those killing fields. I risked all and dashed in among 'em. Otherwise, you see, my friends were lost, laid under an enchantment of fatal sleep that might last forever—"

"Oh, nonsense," Mar broke into this long exposition. She didn't like to hear the character of her own Charmed Garden thus impugned. "You must be cracked!" she accused stoutly.

"Ah, you've noticed, I see," said the wooden man and reached up to take down his head and trace with a gnarled finger the deep fissure that ran from vine-stump to neck hole along the line of one fluting. "It was rather tragic. It was pouring down rain at the time, so thick I couldn't see where I was stepping. As I belted along my foot must have caught in a disused rabbit hole or something, for in an instant I was down and my head rolling heaven knew where. I've spent all day in that field—for I see it is night now groping about, feeling for the head. It's no wonder if it and I are thoroughly saturated from the insidious exhalation

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tions of the Deadly Poppy Field.”

“The Deadly Poppy Field!” cried the others. “Oh, heaven!” For the tale had carried far and wide of that most threatening of natural phenomena in all Oz.

Too late!

Already the powerful fumes in which Jack’s clothes had been steeping throughout the livelong day had wafted from him in the cool evening air and were attacking the olfactory organs of the three travelers. One after another, Polychrome first, they slid into comas—while Jack looked on chagrined.

Still, I suppose that was as good a way as another to get through the night in that region far from any shelter. The night breezes and the passage of time were salutary. Gradually the poisonous fumes dissipated. When they were no longer breathing them in, it was not long before the rainbow maiden, the kangaroo, and the leprechaun awoke refreshed. They stretched, and greeted the orange sun that was just peeping over the blue-green trees in the east.

“Oh, I’m famished,” declared Polychrome. “Even I!” She recalled the cold turkey treatment that Jack Pumpkinhead had received in the night and wished she had a slice.

If Polychrome was famished you can imagine how the others felt. They scarcely said ‘Good morning’ to Jack, who had sat guard over them through the night, before they were all talking at once about how hungry they were.

“I can’t get rid of the thought,” said the leprechaun, “of that foine piece of pepper-cheese I went back to New Jersey for. At the moment I’d even settle for a piece of New Jersey.”

Meanwhile Mar’s food fantasies were making her see sandwiches in stones and cooks in the running brooks (one flowed into the Munchkin River just nearby). “Look!” she exclaimed, straining her eyes toward the vermilion dawn, “aren’t those gum trees?” Her mouth watered at the thought of a bale of the succulent leaves. Like her compatriots, the koalas, she knew what was good.

“Why, no, I believe they’re damas,” contradicted the rain-

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bow fairy, "source of the divine dama fruits, the most ambrosial food in Oz!"

She set off running, followed but a few paces behind by the kangaroo and the leprechaun. Poor uneating Jack Pumpkinhead was left sitting bewildered on a stone.

It turned out the kangaroo was right: they *were* gum trees. Chewing gum. "Ooh," groaned the ravenous trio, desperately disappointed. Have you ever breakfasted on chewing gum? You'll know how they felt. That the ground below the gum trees was thickly overgrown with sugar bushes was not much help. The starvers gathered a few handfuls of the leaves and licked them disconsolately as they returned to their companion on the rock.

"I wish I could help," said Jack.

Siko Pompus looked at the pumpkin-headed man and suddenly a wicked gleam appeared in his eye. "Sure, ye could an' all—if only we had a pot."

"What do you want a pot for?" queried Mar Supial. "Because you wouldn't have to wait long. I noticed any number of pot plants back there at the grove. To the right of the pan-trees."

That was all the leprechaun was waiting for. He was off at a run back toward the trees in the east. "Now what in the world...?" muttered the kangaroo.

For once Jack Pumpkinhead was thinking faster than his companions. "I'm afraid I know," he said. "There were sugar bushes, you say? And a bit of water from the stream... Oh, well, I'm cracked' anyway... Stewed pumpkin can be rather tasty, I understand... when there's nothing else."

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“Official business,” you said, flashing your C.D. card at the soldierette on duty at the garnet gate. It was Captain Jinjur herself.

“Right you are. Straight through, around behind, and second door on the right. That’s the tradesmen’s and diplomats’ entrance.”

You decided not to protest. You pleaded inexperience and requested accompaniment by the captain (formerly general) herself. You didn’t explain that you were Ruler Pro Tem of All Oz—or no, ARAO, that’s what you were calling yourself.

You had suggested to Sorceress Glinda that she bring old-time star Jinjur along with her to the Palace of Magic but you were reminded now again that she hadn’t. Having this ‘second’ chance to meet the former celebrity, you weren’t going to let the opportunity for a little togetherness escape you again.

You knew from your reading that the former general, bored with her life as a farmer (and farmer’s wife) in Munchkinland (even if it was a candy farm), had sent a job application to the Witch of the South and been taken on. For many years now Jinjur had given satisfaction as chief of the palace guard at the all-woman court.

Now she stacked her peppermint rifle and followed along with a shrug. You gave her sidelong glances as you walked together toward the Pink Palace, until the young woman got irritated at the covert inspection and made conversation by saying, “You one of the refugees?”

“‘Refugees’?!” you echoed in surprise.

“Yeah. The Queen of Dreams is in there—with her whole dang family. Thought maybe you were her secretary of state or somep’n like that.”

You gaped in the greatest astonishment you had felt all day, even including your reaction to the amazing ease with which you had taken over the, government of Oz. “The Queen of Dreams a refugee!” you marveled, “—like from the Kingdom of

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Dreams... off there across the desert?" You waved vaguely in the indicated direction.

"That's the one," confirmed Jinjur, shifting her chewing tobacco. "I hear that everybody that can make it is heading out of Dreamland as quick as they can go."

"But what in the world?..." Now you had one reason more, and an urgent one, to get a squint at the Great Book of Records. What had been going on in Oz? and, indeed, the whole continent of Sempernumquam?! "Has Her Majesty mentioned why?"

"Said something about an invasion but didn't give any details. She'll be waiting to unload it all on the Sorceress when she gets back."

You could have said something about the likelihood of Glinda's returning to her palace any time soon but you held your peace. Instead: "Never mind about the Record Room. Take me to Her Highness first," you instructed. The captain followed commands.

You wondered what the queen would be like, and how to address her. Why, you didn't even know what her name was. None of the Oz books you'd ever read had mentioned it. Indeed, you didn't even know the Kingdom had a queen, though it was a thing by no means to be marveled at. You wondered if Jinjur would be puzzled if you asked if the visitor was a "queen regnant". But anyway you could ask:

"What is Her Majesty's title exactly?"

"Why, just 'Queen Sonyo', I guess," replied the captain nonchalantly. She rapped briskly on the door of the Reception Chamber.

"Not 'Sonya'?" you whispered.

"'Sonyo' is the way I heard it."

Then the door was opened wide and you were both inside.

Near tall French windows at the end of the gracious room was a soft-blue-pink chaise longue with one large romantically flared back-rest corner. On it sat a pale lady. She turned as you entered and raised a hand benignantly in token of—what? You could hardly say.

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You were carried away at once in admiration. It was so strange: she looked exactly as you had always pictured her. But when was “always”? for you had not known of her existence until this moment.

Queen Sonyo rose and advanced to greet you. Of course!: a real queen would not stand on ceremony, nor yet like a statue, and just wait to be approached. She would extend a hand, now clearly in gracious welcome, and you would know enough to take just the finger tips, lightly, and make a gesture toward an obeisance.

The doors clicked just audibly behind you. Even manly Captain Jinjur was perceptive, sensitive, in the vicinity of the charming queen! You were alone with the lady—or... not quite. For was the room not crowded with presences scarcely glimpsed, transparent, ghost-like? You could not be sure. Were there not sighings and whisperings just below the threshold of consciousness? Queen Sonyo too had an air of listening, of half glancing about, as she led you to the light from beyond long russet drapes.

You stood in talk, although there was no need of words. Silently you told each other all about yourselves and reached a perfect understanding. Presently you groped unseeing for the arm of a chair and sank into it. The news, though so gently imparted, was overwhelming.

It seemed that something like a vast explosion had taken place within the last week in a remote part of Somnia (which, with Morphia, comprised the territory of Dreamland). The Queen wasn't sure about prime causes. She only knew that in the depths of night suddenly every window in the Palace of Dreams was blown in—or out—and she and everyone within hurled away, in some cases hundreds of miles. The queen had come to herself to find that she had been carried quite across the great desert into the land of Oz.

Her sufferings had been intense but she didn't allow herself to dwell on that. Certainly you could see no traces about her person of her recent travail. In her evanescent draperies (you would not have been able to say what colors they were), with

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her silvergold hair, and wearing a discreet coronet, she was enchanting. What would be her age? you caught yourself wondering. Oh, ageless.

And the children of Queen Sonyo? What of them?

As she had made her way onward through Oz, seeking sanctuary, the queen had encountered many of her countrymen of Dreamland who shared in the fate of unforeseen and violent exile. Among them were some of her own children, who were of course numberless. They were about you now. Did you not see them?

But the distresses of individual Dreamers were not what counted. Such would pass. What wrought upon the queen's mind without ceasing (though you could see no signs of the great internal turmoil) was a thing which she could in no way define. However, as it seemed to her, the cataclysm that had struck her country, far from bringing death and destruction, had given rise to life and creation—but oh! in terrible abundance.

How was this evidenced? you wondered. In silence the Queen communicated to you a thousand examples: things seen by herself or told of by the refugees who were arriving every moment at Sorceress Glinda's palace. (Strange. You had seen none about.) Tales of life where no life should be. Reports of whispering grass and blabbering trees, of talking machines and moving pictures, of living rooms and living languages, of animated films and inspired speeches, of spirited music coming from vital organs, of vivid colors, particularly quick silver, of walking shoes and dancing slippers, of running noses and flying saucers, of brisk walks and live wires. The list seemed endless. Everything that couldn't live was doing it anyway. Nor was the process of unholy coming-to-life diminishing in spate. The prospect was terrifying. Had you seen nothing of all this in your own travels?

No, you told the Queen: in your walkabout in Oz you had seen some pretty incredible things but nothing, really, that you had not, as it were, been warned might be alive. Neither subsequently, during your air journey by umbrella, had you encoun-



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tered anything that was living out of turn, though now that you thought about it the forests below *had* seemed to seethe, rather, in an unpropitious manner and the brooks leapt in a way that was uncalled-for.

Even that was not the worst, the queen confided. What she was absolutely unable to accommodate in her philosophy was that something had happened that changed the very nature of dreams and dreaming themselves!

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

Glod went on shooting—or falling; it all depends on where you were viewing it from. It kept meeting particles from the expanding universe and swallowing them whole. Now that it had learnt to convert inert matter into living tissue its own life merely extrapolated furiously. That life nourished itself on all the universal waste it met and the slushball kept getting more vital with every eon that passed.

It didn't grow all that much in size. Rather, it transformed mass into energy. It was so alive it just wasn't true. Gone were the days of freezing solid in a huff. Glod had to stay loose, really to close around and convert to vibrant life every pebble it ran into.

The slushball was impatient now. It felt all this splendid life going to waste and it wanted to get somewhere and do something with it: populate worlds, create empires, turn universes into paradises. Consequently, by an act of will, it speeded itself up so as to get in quicker to where space was really thick and there was something to choose from.

Glod trained itself to be able to intuit oncoming rocks from far away and to alter course subtly so as to be able to derive maximum additional velocity from the impetus of the colliding body. It didn't mind the thumps. It only gloried every time it doubled its former speed, to streak one finally, at almost the velocity of light. It didn't intend to *exceed* the speed of light because then it wouldn't have been able to see and admire its own starry glow.

One day, obviously, the comet was going to meet something big. By now it had delusions of grandeur and determined that it was not going to be satisfied crashing on some puny asteroid where no way could you get a respectable empire going. It steered its way expertly through the broken field of (by now) Inner Space, still gobbling up debris small enough to make use of but dodging small stars and planets that didn't offer sufficient scope. Then one day it caught sight of a little solar system

that looked inviting.

Now, Glod's favorite color was blue—closely followed by green. It couldn't have said why; it was just so. Its really ideal color was a sort of teal or aquamarine. When it saw a blue star (just like Polychrome) shining down asking where Glod was, the comet thought 'That's for me!' and made straight for it. Actually the star was a planet but just then shining so bright by reflected glory that Glod was confused.

Well, you (if you are reading this book, now that your adventures are over) will have guessed what happened. Glod streaked past Mars, narrowly missed the Moon, and swung briefly (by comet time) into orbit round the blue planet. It was not landing without casing the joint. Oh, perfect!: everything that was not blue on this world was green. Whups, wait half a tick!; there were some unpleasant yellow and white patches on it. Glod hadn't time to zero in precisely if it was going to get maximum advantage of its momentum. Don't forget the comet was still not quite the size of an elephant. When it spied another one of those unpleasant yellow streaks coming up ahead it braked as best it could and plummeted straight into the first/best area of blue-green surface still left to it.

Without a murmur (of complaint) but with a splat heard round the world the slushball buried itself in a forest in the Kingdom of Dreams, some distance from the Growleywog border. That was the end of Glod as an independent agent. But its pulsing life was by *no!* means extinct.

Released from the loose confederation of its constituent mass, the molecules of Glod (we'll call them 'glodules') burst out in every direction and were most of them miles away by the time the last trees in the Grove of Academe stopped falling.

Some glodules penetrated deep into the earth and brought to life boulders of basalt and pebbles of plagioclase that had never dreamed of living before. This does not, however, imply that they sprouted arms and legs and began going anywhere. They just ricocheted back and forth a while under the ground, producing an untoward boiling of the earth for dozens of miles

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roundabout that lasted for a week. Afterwards they more or less fell to rest in the same sort of jumble they'd been in before, with only this difference: that earth in that region could think long thoughts.

Those glodules that flew along the surface of the earth were able to wreak more. Having throughout hundreds of millenia been used to infusing with over-bubbling life everything they encountered, they couldn't stop now. They blasted away in all directions (though prevailingly east) and brought life to every entity they ran up against: every bit of earth, all water, the very air itself sprang into sentience. Every branch on every blown-down tree at Academe became a mini-tree in itself and every twig a personality, and all of them talking at once, discussing in excited, almost hysterical, terms what had just (be)fallen.

The wraith-like dreams and Dreamers who inhabited the country were most of them blown far from home and family and came to themselves in countries far away. They were already (both sorts) living beings and now, far from dying from the blast, they became more alive than ever before. Now they were alive not only as individuals; from here on every part of them had its own separate life. Each hair, for instance, on a Dreamlander's head was now alive in its own right. When a head of hair got to chattering a among itself—with a sort of twanging stringlike speech from each individual strand—the effect was deafening to the poor head itself. Many people (if one could call the Dreamers people exactly) went insane from the cacophony and confusion and had to be put away.

One understands that every form of order and control in Dreamland was dispelled. All over the world people's dreams began to go haywire. Within the Kingdom of Dreams itself it was total chaos, utter anarchy. If Glod had any longer been able to think and plan as an integral personality it would have realized that on its way to world empire it had already won two kingdoms (the Growleywogs collapsed without a struggle in one fell—very fell—swoop).

If Glod's sense of oneness was gone, its ambitions too had

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atomized and now were found in each particle of life-giving life that it had disintegrated into. Each glodule could only think and do one thing: take over, take over, take over! by means of infesting everything in the whole world with insidious life.

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

The two chief Oz rulers had finally come upon a pleasant pergola and made it their temporary capitol. There they met with the various heads of state from all over Oz, and even from lands beyond the Desert, who now came flocking to the Charmed Garden of Gardenia, impelled by the various summonses that had gone out.

“What’s it all in aid of?” said the Elegant Elephant, who was present as Principal Pachyderm of Regalia.

The Wizard of Oz replied, “It’s not of our doing. Ozma and I are just innocent bystanders. It’s all been arranged over our heads. But no doubt the Usurper” (as you were now being called in snide asides) “means something by it... Oh, excuse me, there’s the Blue Emperor. I must just have a word with him.”

The crowned heads were all circulating as if it were a garden party. In fact, that was just what it was turning out to be. The Wizard had done one of his party tricks and erected a charming blue-green and white pavilion under a spreading chestnut tree; there guests could get tea or ozade and hot croz buns.

Ozma had given up her rather half-hearted search for the missing people from her court and was in conference with some of the sagest of her counselors from all over Oz in an effort to provide her people with guidelines on a larger scale. Only particularly devoted individuals were continuing to look for old cronies, the Tin Woodman, for instance, ducking the girl ruler’s council and clumping off in the wrong direction to seek the Scarecrow. As it happened, none of those still hunting chanced to cross the Brandywine brook.

Kabumpo strolled on. Presently he ran into the Frogman, who had taken leave from his traveling sideshow to accept the invitation of Glinda, at whose court they were entertaining. “How are Notta and the boy?” asked the elephant.

“You can ask them themselves,” replied the frog jauntily. “They’re about somewhere. And yourself? You’re looking in the purple.” Here he fingered the elegant one’s new velvet robe.

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"I was born to it," dismissed the giant. "Come on! Want to give a gander after Dorothy and that bunch? It's coming on for evening and I don't like the idea of those frail girls wandering in the cold somewhere."

"Sure." After all, that's what the forgathering in Gardenia was principally in aid of. The frog was happy to lend a foot. For a wonder the two started off south, instead of northeast or west, whither the other vain searchers today had strayed in their quests.

"Glad it's stopped all that raining," remarked Kabumpo as they respectively lumbered and hopped along. "Any more wet would turn the girls' situation from awkward to downright unhealthy."

"Mmm," agreed Fred the Frogman. "Pretty windy though. Look at that bush." The silver-green leaves of the little shrub were fluttering in the greatest agitation.

The elephant's thoughts were elsewhere, though. He tramped squarely on the bush, flattening it to the ground. It sprang back again at once and lifted all its crumpled leaves beseechingly but found itself shaking them at the backs of the retreating pair. So much for the assistance of the Advice Bush this time around.

Kabumpo broke down a good many aspens and alders making his way through the thickets down the slope. After half an hour they came on an attractive brown-bubbling brook. Fred Fruakx gave a mighty leap and cleared it but the elephant stopped for a draught of the tempting waters.

"'Waters'?" he gasped, too late, after a barrellful of brandy had gone down. "Phawww!" But there was little he could do to get the burning taste out of his mouth or the natural reaction to the drink out of his system.

The pair blundered on, now gently upward again. Progress grew a little slower as the Elegant Elephant stopped occasionally to dance a jig or seize up the Frogman in his trunk and whirl him round briefly in a gesture of defiance. Fate was not going to be allowed to bring his young girl friends to any harm now that he, Kabumpo, was actively enlisted in the ser-

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vice of their rescue!

Fred the Frogman was bewildered! The penny had dropped for him immediately and the two were not yet out of sight of the Brandywine before he realized his companion was inebriated. But he, Fred (Fritz) Fruakx, had taken nothing. How then could he be so suddenly feeling so sleepy? and what was that slightly sickish sweet smell in the air? Kabumpo's breath, naturally. But how did he continue to smell it also when moving along Upwind of the elephant?

The arrival at the top of the ridge was a sobering experience for both the would-be saviors. The Frogman's half-daze fell from him in an instant and even Kabumpo stopped singing and emitted a startled trumpet-noise as they surveyed the Deadly Poppy Field in all its glory.

"Well, *boy!*" gurgled the pachyderm. "Thass somep'n, idn't it?! A deadly popple fee—uhh, a feadly doffy pield... oh, you know what I mean..."

"Quite so," replied the frog, cold sober and wide awake—for the moment. "And what if our friends have strayed into it and are lying out there somewhere...? That would account for our not seeing or hearing a peep from them all this time."

"Avanti!" cried the elephant and plunged among the poppies. He did not stop to consider that he too could and would fall victim to their fumes; it just might take a bit longer in his case, as compared to mere people. Fritz the frogman thought of that but had no means of calling a halt to his large friend's progress. Willy-nilly he followed after.

Of course it was not very long before they came upon a slumbering Betsy Bobbin with a firmly rooted Vegetable Man beside her. Kabumpo set up a hullabaloo to wake the dead, though, alas, not the living. Sleepers of the poppy sleep never responded to mere speech. Why?!, he wanted to know, in the name of all that was mos' precious had Garter Creen allowed Betsy to come even within sight of the deadly flowers?!

Though just a plant now Carter could still talk. He did it—rapidly. *His* thoughts were not beclouded. "All will be known to



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you in due course," he said quickly. "For now, be a good fellow and wrap that trunk around my stalk and pull me up by the roots."

Kabumpo had just enough of his wits about him to do as he was told. Fred meanwhile had managed to tilt the sleeping Betsy upright. Now that the Vegetable Man was mobile again and quickly darting away along a path the frog gestured for the elephant to seize up the girl and swing her high as the pair of newcomers set out in Carter's wake.

Lurching from side to side the mighty elephant swung along. He failed to notice the still waterlogged Scarecrow lying on the path and trampled him flat, though at the same time expressing useful amounts of moisture out of the former ruler of Oz. Carter and Fritz let fall a symbolic tear at the straw-stuffed favorite's fate as they, in turn, stepped over him and hurried on. The state of the trio of (hopably) still mortal Oz girls was more to the point just now.

In minutes they came upon the collapsed bevy, lying just where they had fallen, half in the fatal field of flaming flowers, half on the path. Kabumpo added Betsy to the pile and looked about for a place to sit down. He was incautious. As he stumbled to his knees, well away from the slumbering maidens, and gave up the ghost, collapsing onto his colossal side, he again played ducks and drakes with a celebrated Oz personage and pinned Carter Green, the Vegetable Man, to the ground.

That left just the Frogman as viable negotiator in the parlous state of affairs. Night was falling fast and his friends were falling faster. What ought he to do? Leap like mad, obviously, back to the vicinity of the crowned heads, who by now were sitting cosily about campfires, roasting marshmallows and wieners. But, alas, there was, no time for that.

Fred felt insidious sleep creep over him and he had no time to do more than clamber groggily over the elegantly sleeping elephant, unbuckle his great flowing blanket robe, and tug the loose end of it free and away to where he was just able to cover with it the sleeping girls. Gently he tested the sleepers' dresses

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and hair ribbons. Well, that was all right. By now the afternoon breezes had dried up the worst of the soaking they had got. Nobody would wake up with pneumonia.

Fred (Fritz) Fruakx, frogman friend-in-need, crawled some yards off along the path and then subsided into snores, final victim for the time being of the fatal floral fumes.

Though distinctly stated to be under ground, the Garden of Gorba shared in a curious way in the seasons and diurnal changes of the world above it. Thus its insistence on having autumn flowers in bloom now that it was Oztober. Similarly, it got dark in the garden right in rhythm with the natural world out 'on top'. That was happening now as the animal heroes made their way back along the way they had come.

With no words of discussion being required, the party had with one impulse determined to give up the venture. Their hearts hadn't really been in it for some time. They had discovered nothing even slightly suggesting that this was where their Emerald City friends had disappeared. They had merely got a mud bath for their pains.

They ignored the blandishments of the "stepping stones" which slid up to them and insinuated that the beasts might ride rather than going on walking. With twice as many feet as humans to complicate direction-giving to the stones, how could they have any assurance they would stay together and not end up all in different far corners of the vast estate?

All except the ABC-serpent, of course. It suffered from a complete lack of feet. Probably if it slithered onto one of the traveling flagstones the stone would not go anywhere at all. Yet the creature was willing to try. "Shouldn't we do *something*," it complained, "while we're in this bewitched garden? What about destroying the magician, Gorba? Princess Pretty Good did say he's a nasty old thing. It could be our good deed for the day."

It seemed as if serpents had learned little since Eden about not conspiring awful fates for humans—if Gorba *was* (sometimes) human...?

"You see a Gorba, you destroy a Gorba," advised the lion leader laconically. "Myself, I'll leave bad enough alone for the time being."

So the animals just plodded on back up the slope toward the golden gate and were at any rate safely through that even be-

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fore the mud impacted upon them had dried.

The drying process went on, however, apace during the long haul along the garden hedge to the roots of the hollow tree. By then night had encroached until the subterranean world lay in total darkness. No moon or stars here to give an orienting faint light for the guidance of travelers. It was literally impossible to do more than crouch to the ground and wait for morning. As it happened, the creatures' coating shells of dried mud kept in natural body heat so that, though they suffered from the stink, they did not experience inconvenience from any night chill.

Daylight brought some alleviation. For one thing, the now thoroughly hard-dried mud began to break off in larger or smaller chunks. The animals left a trail of trod-upon and re-trod-upon evil-smelling dust behind them as they toiled up the endless-seeming stairway inside the hollow redwood. This great tree had the disgrace of appearing no more than eleven feet tall outside on the surface of the earth. All its grand and noble length was taken up with extending down into the soil and on to the subterranean world where its actual roots at last found fundament in the fecund earth beside the enchanted garden.

It was still early daylight when one by one the animal crew stepped, or slithered, out of the hole in the redwood and found themselves back at square one. They were beside the road that led ultimately to the Emerald City, and the little pink bear was crying.

"What's the trouble now?" asked, kindly, its new companion, the blue bearskin.

"Bamse's birthday party is all over!" said the pink bear. "*That* was yesterday." And it wept woefully.

"Never mind," said the blue bear. "Didn't you say it was to be a surprise party? Maybe the lavender bear will have been just as surprised by there *not* being a party."

With that cold comfort the pink bear had to be content. For now, as the animals as a unit turned back toward home, new mysteries came to assail them. It began charmingly enough. "Hi!" cried some Michaelmas daisies growing beside the road and they

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waved their leaves jauntily in make-believe gestures of hitchhiking.

"I beg your pardon," stated the stuffy old Courageous Lion. "Did you address us?"

"Well, we did rather," giggled the daisies but would say no more. The Hungry Tiger lowered his head to sniff at them but found the plants, aside from their conversability, uninteresting and left then in peace.

"That was peculiar, wasn't it?" said the Lion as they walked on. "Do daisies normally talk in Oz? I hadn't realized."

"No. They don't," said a mailbox on a post close by the roadway.

At this the lion was obliged to beg pardon again. "You did speak, didn't you?" asked Rex.

And how. The box's flap was open and it proved a real blabbermouth, its big lower lip bobbing up and down as it talked a Munchkin-blue streak. "Sure, I spoke. Been doing it non-stop since yesterday. Why, the mail-man could hardly get a letter in edgewise. You can guess I had plenty to say. I've been waiting a lifetime to talk but never could 'til yesterday. Then suddenly, right after that heavy rain, remember? I realized I had vocal cords. Funny I'd never discovered the fact before! but there was no gainsaying it. First I tasted the letters in my mouth but so far I haven't learned lip-reading so I couldn't tell what they said. But never mind: pretty soon a robin perched on me and we had a rare old natter. *He* didn't gape when I spoke to him but took the novel proceeding as the most natural things in the world and talked on about household forms and ceremonies—"

"About *what*?" gasped the lion, constrained at last to interrupt. It was all getting more unbelievable by the minute.

"That's right. His wife had sent him out, much against his will, to find twigs and straw for a new nest. When he pointed out that birds don't move nest in the autumn, she said—"

"Okay, okay, we get the picture," broke in Hank the mule. During the many hours of their slow-motion adventure he had at last grown seriously anxious about the well-being of his dear

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friend Betsy Bobbin and was now concerned to push onward and to find the true garden of her confinement.

None of the party was averse to passing forward in some haste, leaving the mailbox to chatter to itself. The animals had too much to say to themselves to allow of much dawdling in talk with others. "Fluent flowers and muttering mailboxes," mused the Woozy. "What can it all mean? *Animals* have always talked in Oz, but then we're alive. How can lifeless things talk?"

"Daisies aren't lifeless," reminded the Sawhorse.

"No, but they can't move," said the brown-pink kitten. "Talking seems to go with being able to move."

"Except sometimes," put in Bungle and recalled to their minds the Fighting Trees, who were more than just arboreally alive and could move in purposeful ways, although admittedly not flitting from place to place.

"Maybe there are degrees of life," suggested little Toby, the life-sized pug, who never spoke a lot but when he did it was to the point. "And real complete aliveness would be when you can walk and talk and do everything—the way we can."

"And eat?" barked Toto and smirked at his cocanine a little derisively.

"Well, no," said Toby, "some of us aren't *that* alive."

"How about flying, Mr. Smarty-Pants?" put in Eureka in support of her friend, to Toto who was not her friend. "I don't suppose anyone could claim to be fully alive who can't fly on his own."

That brought a chorus of protests from all the others—who were four-footed and earthbound. They considered themselves to be as fully living as any mere bird.

"Let's agree," said, finally, Jim the Cab-horse, settling the argument, "that there are degrees of life and that whatever level one oneself is on is as alive as anything needs to be!"

Queen Sonyo beseeched you in the most compelling terms to travel into Dreamland and to try to find out just what had happened. What *was* that explosion that had wrought such havoc? What was the condition of her beloved country now? Most urgent of all: what was the nature of the change in the character of dreams that her soul divined?

Thrall, now and forever, to her charms; naturally you agreed. But still, you asked to know: what could she tell you of that change in dreams? You knew of course, even as a lay person, that no one, scientists and psychologists included, knew anything about dreams. Dreams were the one thing that, by themselves alone, negated all the wisdom of pragmatic science. There was nothing in the Record of the Rocks that would ever explain how we can *see*, as in a vivid picture, the events of a dream: the colors, the textures, the most minute details of things that were never in this world.

But if anybody *could* give an inkling, surely it was the Queen of Dreams herself. What and how! did she know? Could she define processes?

No, she couldn't. Still conversing without the need for words her mind told yours. In the present case all that she knew, or sensed, was that the overwhelming 'enlivening' of all and everything that had succeeded the frightful explosion extended into the nature of dreams themselves. Dreams were now, in some unfathomable way, alive. That was all she could say.

You remained as puzzled as ever, shook your head, and knelt to take your leave of the queen of your dreams. Afterwards you saw that she turned to the tall window and looked out—and her shoulders shook as silent crying claimed her.

Brusquely you went to do your duty, to meet your destiny. You thought of it that way now. Just the same, you would like company in the great undertaking and as you passed the guard-house you looked in.

"Captain?" you said. "I'm bound away. Little matter I have

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to attend to for the Queen. I think I could use assistance. Could you take leave of absence...?"

Jinjur looked up from doing the crossword in *Boys' Own*. In her surprise she stopped chewing her quid. "Hm," she vouchsafed. "That comes up behind me a bit. Still, why not? I'm chief of the guard. I can designate authority when I need to. Munn, my aide, will pinch-hit for me. When are we off? and for how long?"

You admired her. "This minute—for as long as it takes," you said. "Not long, I think."

Jinjur bent to her new-fangled intercom and spoke terse orders. Then she joined you. "Transpo?" she asked.

"That's taken care of." You indicated the carefully rolled bumbershoot.

The captain's reply was laconic but unprintable. When she had got that out of her system she spat her plug, then grabbed hold with a vengeance. There was *just* room on the handle for a hand of each of you. You were off.

The mechanics of the flying umbrella, such as you had (re)devised them, were of this nature: so long as you were in *touch* with the apparatus you were supported by it. There was no exhausting hanging on with the strength of your own arm bearing up all your gravity-logged weight. That would have rendered umbrella-flying torture in the first five minutes. No, as long as your hand touched the handle of the device you were as if weightless; you seemed to be borne along as in a vacuum. Even the buffets of the wind were inconsiderable.

You directed your course outward; at the same time you told the umbrella to put on some speed.

Across the red landscape you flew and ever higher and higher. Afterwards you could hardly tell, looking down, where the pleasant prairies of Oz verged into the sands of the Deadly Desert.

Mostly your eyes were ahead, peering to discern the first signs of that land of dreams we all yearn toward. But you could not help but notice, flying lower, over that desert so barren of all



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markings, anything that might be found upon the trackless waste. Alas, there were things to be seen down there. What were they? Small shriveled things, of indeterminate color and shape. Then there were more of them as you drew nearer to the kingdom of Dreams.

It came to you, indeed as in a dream, that those were the remains of dreams. Blown out of their homeland in some mighty blast they had fallen to earth to parch and expire. All, then, in the wake of the great catastrophe, was not a pure springing to life.

And yet... As you swooped still lower for a dreading look you saw the horrid desiccated shapes reach out phantom fingers, struggle onto bone-bare knees, hold up brittle things like arms in vain acts of supplication. With horror you realized there is such a thing as living death.

Gratefully, that term of trial now ended quickly for you. At hand was the purple horizon, shot through with streams of pink, and this was the approach to the Kingdom of Dreams. You glanced at Captain Jinjur and she at you, both too awed by now for words or need of them.

Yet on you flew, still keeping low, wanting to find clues in the landscape. Soft grey banks of cloud lay upon the desert border, where the moist air of the interior met the oven heat of the wasteland.. Then green trees; yes, lovely. Then blue trees. Fine. Purple and violet trees? You saw too that many were but skyward-reaching arms of tall timber that had fallen flat to earth at no great backward distance in time. But red and black and silver trees?

It was the Rainbow Forest, of course. If you had been able to read up on Dreamland geography and topography you would have known. The Rainbow was the greatest of all the forests in the kingdom of Dreams, a land itself very largely given over to forests—to those and to some areas of more open prairie. This last was rolling country covered with flower meadows, with the occasional dale and something here and there approaching a mountain. For the landscape of dreams must be varied. Only a

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seacoast was lacking to the Kingdom: that vital ingredient of many dreams. And yet again, dreams *are* enclosed things, not open ocean-like to the wideness of the world.

Even so there were riparian opportunities. Across the country, diagonally from corner to corner, flowed the river Lethe. It arose in the white highlands beyond the southern frontier. Where the river passed between the capital towns of Somnia and Morphia it achieved a considerable breadth, only to peter out in a morass near the desert rim of Dreamland. The Lethe supplied most households of the kingdom with drinking water, and the water was sweet! Made so and renewed by the run-off from the sugar wasteland of Boboland. The precipitation there was mostly powdered sugar, not nourishing to the soil, with the result that the highlands resembled, and were called, a desert. But occasionally a shower of real rain fell and succeeded in keeping things ticking over dextrosely.

Something of all this you saw as onward you flew. You passed over dreamy valleys and sleepy towns, guided always by the orientation of the fallen trees. These pointed diametrically away from the epicenter of that unexplained blast that had leveled the fair land in vast chaos. The signs of the devastation were everywhere. Flattened fences, havocked houses, topless towers; roadways covered with debris; water courses choked with flotsam; nor anywhere a sign of people moving.

And yet the landscape pulsed with life. The toppled trees bristled with new leafage, the roads were rolling and winding in apparent efforts to shake off their loads of fallen rubbish, the lakes and streams seethed, and the broken buildings groaned and complained about the damage they had suffered.

The fliers were led by their tree guidelines northwest. They saw the flattened twin towns beside the river, where Queen Sonyo and her friends had suffered, but it was clear that whatever had happened had its center yet farther west. The umbrellists crossed the Lethe at the point where the river angled northeast near a vast sandbank.

You were leaving behind the white waters of the river of sleep

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when Jinjur said, "Look." You followed her gesture's direction and succeeded in making out a tiny tan figure that leapt about on the summit of an ochre-tinted mountain of sand. A human(?) shape still abroad in the depopulated land was a novelty and you dropped down for a nearer look.

Nor were the motions of the prancing figure without purpose, you soon saw. It proved to be a little withered yellowish man (no wonder that some people, seeing him on the verge of sleep, supposed him to be Japanese?) and he was waving his arms at you quite desperately.

He appeared to be all alone and certainly he looked harmless. With a nod of agreement exchanged with the captain you pitched down in a soft billow of sand of the consistency of dust. In a moment the two of you had scrambled up and you ran, half stumbling and tripping in the footclog soil. Jinjur laughed, for the first time since you had known her.

"What is it?!" you called when still at a distance. That the fellow understood your language you never called in question. In dreams one is always able to communicate. You may dream of speaking in foreign languages yourself but as good as never does anyone speak to you without your understanding.

"Rescue, fair friend, or else the land is lost!" cried the little fellow in romantic wise. You thought it a little antique-flowery, but you enjoyed it.

"Well met," you cried in matchingly bookish language. "How may I serve you?"

"I must from hence! Canst give a lift upon yon bumbershoot?"

"Maybe we can. But what is your cause? And how are you bight?"

"I am that Sand Man known of yore, and this my realm. But reel 'tis all laid waste!" The poor chap seemed shaken by dry sobs.

"Your realm?" you returned, still not venturing to tutoyer. "I made sure one Queen Sonyo was prince of the realm."

"'Tis true. My lady reigns. But I be the power behind the

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throne. I am he who determines who shall dream what and when—At least, I was! Now I be not so sure.”

The man’s plight seemed pitiable but still you hadn’t got any clear picture of what was actually ailing him. It was evident he hadn’t suffered any great bodily damage during the recent disaster. The ills must be psychological. “Now tell us all your story,” you requested.

Without ado the three of you sat down on the sandbank and the Sand Man began with a flourish:

“A star fell out of heaven—”

“Right into your arms?” interpolated Captain Jinjur, who, among her off-beat interests, liked to keep up with the lyrics of old popular songs.

“How did you guess?” The Sand Man boggled. “Yes, almost literally. I was on a field trip in the woody hills along the Growleywog border and became benighted. The night holds no alarms for me, of course. I hung myself—”

“Hung yourself!?” interrupted Jinjur again.

“Yes,” said the little man and looked a question. “Not ‘hanged’! I just hung myself up, tengu-fashion, by the scruff of the neck to a tree branch and prepared to spend the night—”

“‘Tengu?’” The captain *would* keep interrupting.

“Verily. An ilk of goblin that dwells in Japan. We—*they* often sleep in that position.” (Maybe there *was* a bit of the Japanese about this sand man.) He went on to give a rather full account of the nature and habits of tengu,<sup>s</sup> then gradually got back to the point.

“I ween ye’ll have observed the comet that’s grown apace in the night sky.” Yes, you’d been watching it many evenings, and Captain Jinjur too gave firm corroboration. “The star needs must come down some time but who could have divined it would plunge to earth some four or five miles to the southwest of my own perch tree? Forsooth I had observed it light the sky like some hundred times greater Moon but so’d it done for many days—or, rather, nights. I thought nought on’t at the time,

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§ A digression we will not report here, but see *The Vegetable Man of Oz*.

weening it well would do so still some time to come.

"I had but just got off in dreams. Yea, verily, I dream! 'Tis thus I get some of my best ideas for other people's dreams. Be it as it may, in my dream I visited the Sun. Then I began to cry: 'But I go not fain into the sun!' I did but mean to *peel* it like a great orange cheese.

"Yet all my protestions went for nought. Lo, I dropped into our fiery star—or it in me; I scarce know which. All I can tell is that the world was midnight black and blinding light all at one time. I was cast with all violence into the middle of next week."

"Literally?" asked Jinjur.

"Verily. I mean: yon comet struck the earth last week, not so?—or was it sooner yet?—while I but this same very day have only dug my way from out my sand bank here. The force had blown me in it like a pile, head foremost."

You'd noticed from the start the man was sandyhaired. Now you observed sand trickling from his tattered sleeves, filling his torn pockets, and leaking from his shoes. 'Sand in your shoes,' you thought; 'that means you'll come back.'

Sure enough: that was what the Sand Man desired to do. "I needs must see the scope of havoc 'cross the land. Is there hope for this our kingdom of Dreams? And will ye bear me hence to where the comet fell? and after, home again? These are my pleas of you, this day at dusk..."

When their sleep was done, and the eating urges of the Careless Kangaroo, the daughter of the Rainbow, and the New Jersey leprechaun arranged for, Jack Pumpkinhead finally got around to telling them of the sad condition of his other friends. He did this just before they cooked his head.

Afterwards, with their hunger allayed, the trio were determined to obey the last wish of their (partly) departed companion. They wiped their fingers in the grass; they'd been compelled to consume stewed pumpkin Indian-fashion, with the fingers, for lack of tableware (aside from Siko's pocket knife). Then they held council.

"Sure, we'll go the way of the rest," opined the leprechaun, "once among the fatal blooms."

"Never mind. We have to do it," stated Polychrome in irrefutable terms. "What would the others think if we failed to try, however quixotically, to rescue our friends once we heard what a fix they were in?"

"But wait," urged the kangaroo; "the prospect for us isn't so glum as for the Scarecrow's party. You two are fairies! You can cast a spell or something and stop the poppy field from putting people to sleep."

"I can't," said Poly and looked shamefast. "I stupidly left my wand at home when I got off the rainbow. But you..." and both ladies turned to look suggestively at Siko Pompus.

"That's right," urged Mar. "You told us you can wish-grant. It's perfect! You just wish the poppy field deactivated and by the time we reach them all the poor sleepers can be awake and alert. Voila: happy ending!"

"No, I can't," retorted the leprechaun. "I can't grant my *own* wishes. Otherwise I'd never have needed to go to New Jersey to get a piece of cheese. I can only fulfill the desires of others."

"But that's just as good!" the kangaroo went on rejoicing. "I'll simply wish that—"

"No!" yelled the excited elf. "Don't tell me what you'd wish!"

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I can only grant a wish if I haven't heard it, if I don't know what it is."

"Oh, very well," returned liar, still fairly grunted. "Let's be off—and when we get to where the others are Polychrome and I will just wish the poppy-sleepers awake and in their right minds—Oh!"

"Yep," snickered the leprechaun; "that tore it, bedad. Whatever you wish now, it can't be that."

Poor Mar raised her mitted hand and slapped her mouth, chagrined to have been so careless: and to have lessened the chances of their drugged acquaintances of being rescued from their danger. Now she devoted herself to the useful task of taking the hand of headless Jack and leading him up the riverside meadow and into the woods. Never a word said she 'til the party of wayfarers came through the forest and out the other side. From there they had a view of the undimmed scarlet glow of the insidious poppy flowers in the middle distance.

"Now be ye quick!" said Pompus as they got within breathing range of the heady fumes. "Make yer wishes fast—yes, 'twill make for better results if ye *both* wish—for if ye don't we'll all be overpowered afore we can get away."

Though the group still hadn't come upon any of the supposed victims of the poppy field they did discern, without knowing what it was, the purple hill of Kabumpo's mighty flank rising from among the red flowers a hundred yards away: a pleasing color combination. But when Polychrome, in the lead, almost trod on the snoring Frogman she stopped short in surprise and quickly made her wish.

Kangaroo Mar, sensing what Poly had done, made *her* wish. Then they waited.

While they waited they breathed. Sparingly, it is true. But even that bit was more than enough.

Nothing happened. Polychrome frowned, at the same time as she yawned.

The Careless Kangaroo sighed and settled her shawl more comfortably about her as she lay down.

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The leprechaun cursed colorfully. "Sure, the!" he yelled. "Ye'll have been and done something stupid, the pair of ye! Now what'd ye wish?" he demanded of the rainbow maiden accusingly.

"Why, uh—er, I couldn't wish our friends awake and alert again. You'd warned us against that. So I wished the fumes of the blooms to be without any effect. That way at least the sleepers would wake up after a while, when the results of breathing the poppy scent earlier would have worn off..." The fairy closed her eyes.

"Well, it didn't work! Ye see that for yersel's." He prodded the sleeping kangaroo with his foot. "Yerself there!" he shouted loud enough to bring Mar out of it. "What was yer wish now.?"

The kangaroo gaped groggily and raised herself on one elbow. "'Wish'?...Did I wish?... Oh, of course. Let me see: well, you said I mustn't wish our friends wide awake again, so I—er, uhh—oh, I know: I wished all spells and enchantments here to be instantly suspended.

"What happened?"

"Nithin' happened, ye blitherin' fools!" yelled the peppery leprechaun. "There *weren't* any spells here. Not before. The poppies weren't throwin' a spell. They were just doin' what come naturally: puttin' to sleep any creature that breathed too deep of the opium. All *you* did was cancel the rainbow-colleen's spell-wish!"

But he was talking to the empty (or at least only poppy-fume-filled) air. Both lady kangaroo and fairy maiden had sunk in their tracks and were respiring sweetly. Nor did the leprechaun tarry long in doing the like. Jack Pumpkinhead just stood there.



The animal expeditionary force fairly raced down the road, to end crowding into the little gatehouse portway to the garden of Gardenia. At the last they had been driven near to distraction by being talked to by every leaf that trembled on a tree and every yellow brick they trod on. It was unnatural and terribly upsetting. It was also deafening. Everything in and out of nature was now alive and, not content with that, was chattering nineteen to the dozen at the top of its voice. All the unspoken thoughts of years, even in some cases centuries, were being given expression.

"Whew!" said the animal refugees. For some reason it was as unexpectedly quiet within the port as it was unbearably cacophonous without. The beasts flopped down and all just lay there for half an hour enjoying the stillness.

After that some grew restive. They daren't go back out into the blabbering world outside; however, here in the garden gatehouse there was just too little scope for their energies and aspirations. They could not remain there indefinitely.

The rang the porter's bell and presently Tronto opened the door, rubbing her eyes. "Slugabed!" the animals accused. "This *is* the right garden after all! Not that other one you sent us off to."

"What garden?" said the kangaroo girl, playing dense.

"The garden where our friends disappeared. They *must* be inside here. We've got to find them."

"Okay, go ahead. What's stopping you? The gate's open."

"We want you to guide us," explained the Courageous Lion. Just to be sure she didn't try anything, the Hungry Tiger laid his steel-trap jaws gently about the young kangaroo's knee.

"I'll come quietly," said Tronto, convinced.

Without offering morning coffee or thinking about it herself, she led the way, pushing through the gates and giving the thirteen beasts (unlucky amount) the freedom of the

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Charmed Garden of Oz at last.

The crowd looked about them in wonderment. In the first place the charmed garden was charmingly quiet, just as quiet as the half-enclosed chamber of the gatehouse had been. Some tree boughs swayed very lightly in the morning breeze but otherwise all was still. "How charming," sighed the Woozy.

Yes, charming; that was the word. The bluegreen distances beckoned alluringly, the bluebrown cows still grazed peacefully. A few languid clouds floated in the aquamarine sky. Some turquoise shrubbery close by played a symphony in autumn blossom scents in which brewing beer and floor polish played principal parts.

"Which way now?" spoke the Lion, keeping sight of the main goal.

"Which way for what?" asked the willy-nilly cicerone.

"Why, the way our friends might have gone! This place looks vast: more like a great country estate. They could be anywhere."

"Yeah, they could at that," agreed the regrettably nonchalant Tronto. "But for a hazard let's go—um, thataway—" and she flung out a left paw. "I think that's the way that crowd went yesterday."

"What crowd?" growled the lion, faced every minute with surprises.

"Oh, a mob of people insisted on coming in yesterday afternoon—after you'd been here. Two contingents of 'em, actually. I remember the Queen of Oz was with one bunch—"

"Whot!" All thirteen animals raised their voices in one squawk.

"Yes. And then there was a lady—I think she called herself Glinda the Good, though she didn't explain what it was she was good at—"

"Great heavens," said everybody, and the Hungry Tiger added, "You say they went that way?", lifting his muzzle to indicate the southwest.

"That's right," confirmed Tronto and was left behind as

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her thirteen companions dashed away in the direction of the designated compass point, “—unless it was that way.” She put out a tentative paw more toward the northwest. But nobody was there to note her gesture or hear her words.