

“Oh, ha ha!” squealed the Glass Cat, greatly tickled. No wonder: butterflies were fluttering all around her, touching her glass integument with nervous wing-tips.

“Oh, ho ho!” chuckled the Woozy, proud to observe that a little host of pink fritillaries had settled on his square shoulders, where they seemed to be quite at home.

“Oh, hee hee!” giggled Lurabelle Ladybug. “What an anticlimax! After all our work rounding up this crowd. I wonder what we ought to do with them now.”

The Wizard, O.Z. Diggs, wasn’t laughing outright, but he smiled privately to think how he—oh, terribly respectfully—had put one over on the Girl Ruler. The latter had now withdrawn from the scene of the *éclaircissement*. She returned to her state apartments together with her most intimate circle of supporters. These had lately incorporated as The Ozma Association of Devoutly Idolizing and Enthralled Subjects, president: Her Extreme Highness, the princess Dorothy. The Wizard was left to clean up, which consisted in shooing off all the individuals who had gathered, invited or not, to assist at the denouement of the Adventure of the Patchwork Girl.

The Pipts and the Gennets had already departed in a body to make the return journey to the Blue Forest. Though frightfully grateful to queen Ozma for all she had done, or thought she had done, the quartet felt they needed to get away quickly and to a distance to lick their wounds. Wizard Diggs had had a few words with them before they were off.

“Don’t worry,” he said to the upright-walking Dr. Pipt. “You’ll soon regain the crookedness that you were so proud of. I’ll admit that, for myself, I wouldn’t care to be crooked. Just being a humbug was time-consuming enough and I was glad to leave off and become a real magician. As soon as Ozma has simmered down and had time to forget somewhat this little affair I’ll try to get her signature to the warrant we spoke of. Then you can function as a part-time magic operative for

your region of Munchkinland. I'm sure you'll be glad not to have to stir your pots throughout the next six years."

As for the heirs of the ancient royal house of the Munchkin realm, Diggs could well understand that they wouldn't care to live in suburbia as hangers-on of the girl ruler who had caused them so many heartaches.

"Oh, no," assured Mr. Gennet. "Released from the various spells that were holding me back, I'd like to lead a more normal active life. I'm even wondering if I couldn't do something to retrieve a little of the honor and glamor that used to attach to our house.[§] It would be good for the boy." Here he laid a protective arm on Ojo's shoulder.

The Wizard had followed to a side door and seen the group off. Then he returned to what indeed was always known afterwards as the Butterfly Room. He clapped his hands.

"There are a lot of loose ends, friends, to be cleared up. I'm wondering how we should set about them—"

But the said friends were way ahead of him and broke in: "Right! We're no nearer accomplishing *our* quest than we ever were," cried a child, charwoman, clown, and dog, "and we've been at it a lot longer than a mere week! Thirteen years, to be exact. When are we going to get *our* just deserts?"

"Yes," concurred two cats, "and what about Toby's toe?" That sounded unwontedly altruistic, but as it happened the cats, for the time being, had no personal axes to grind. That didn't mean, however, (given their natures) that they were prepared to let things drift.

Rod Litenin and the Lady Stella, being on cloud Nine, said nothing. The Woozy almost didn't say anything until, waking from a short reverie, he cried, "Oh, they're getting away!"

The Woozy had been made almost as blissful as by bees at the attentions of the pink butterflies. Now they, with butterfly minds, had forgotten why they had settled on the Woozy's body. In fact, it was because he had sat in some honey at breakfast and then, in the press of affairs, neglected to get it wiped

§ See *Unc Nunkie of Oz* and also *Ojo of Oz*. Editor's notes.

off before taking part in the denouement at the Palace of Magic. Now the lepidopts were wavering toward the open window and the always alluring outdoors. "I must follow them!" the Woozy said, realizing that whatever should be their fate must be his too. He ran toward an open door.

The door was open because Edward, Prince of Wates, having been virtually ignored by Queen Ozma in her preoccupation with her role as judge and jury and feeling, as a consequence, *de trop*, never a comfortable sensation for one of royal birth, had opened the door and was going to continue going home. He had made considerable progress toward that distant goal, only to lose much of the advantage by this—for him fairly pointless—retrogression to the Emerald City. Now he meant to make up for lost time.

"Oh, wait!" cried the Wizard. "We'll all return south together shortly. The swans are on the lawn. But we can't leave without saying our adieux!"

"No, nor without our compatriots," reminded the china people.

Everybody stopped in dismay. In the excitement of the various consummations and (pseudo)disenchantments that had taken place they had well-nigh forgotten the awful dilemma looming ahead. At least eleven items in the ceramics collection of Princess Dorothy were to be released from captivity and restored to their home. But how in the world were they to go about it?

The thought of bearding the young princess in the midst of the now on-going gathering of The Ozma Association and asking to deprive her of choice pieces from among her collection was frightening to everybody, even—or perhaps especially—the Wizard. He knew better than to cross the influential young lady from Kansas. But the only other immediately self-suggesting course: to creep into the Porcelain Room, sprinkle life-powder on the chinas, and let them make their own way to freedom, was equally daunting. Who but would regard such a high-handed act as burglary?

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They all sat down on the floor right there and gave themselves to pondering. Even the butterflies, vaguely sensing something crucial in the air, turned back. When they did that so did the Woozy, and when he did that so did the Prince of Wates, who anyway on second thoughts preferred to wait for the swan chariots.

After due reflection O.Z. Diggs proposed: "Let us put it to a vote."

"That's a good idea," piped Lurabelle Ladybeetle, though in a voice so tiny that nobody but a few green and blue butterflies heard her.

"That's a *splendid* idea," called Toby, the life-sized pug, who, in eight minutes of cogitation, hadn't been able to decide which of the two courses was the less unnerving.

With that all those remaining gave their assent. To the general surprise, however, the proud but intelligent glass cat immediately made herself spokesanimal for the view that they should present the case to the girl Queen of Oz for arbitration.

"But, Bungle," offered the Pink Kitten, "I thought you didn't have a very high opinion of either of those young ladies. Do you really think we'd get a decision in our favor?"

"Wait and see," said the older cat mysteriously. "Meanwhile, I move that we save time by voting unanimously to take the case to Her Majesty."

All the wavering ones at once gave way. For the benefit of the rest Bungle went on to describe at length the degradation it would be, and the blot on their scutcheons, to break and enter—

"It wouldn't be breaking," reminded the Wizard. "There are no locked doors in the Palace."

"Well, entering anyway," pursued the cat, "and assisting in what would be the violation of the American girl's prized collection, even though we should be motivated by the self-determination of peoples."

She pled skilfully and at the end of ten minutes called for

the show of hands.

The Glass Cat carried the day! Everybody, even including some of the butterflies who, confused, got into the act, put up his hand or whatever he had. Some were surprised that the very delegates from the Dainty China Country themselves voted in favor of the measure. But they may have been moved by the thought that if their compatriots were surreptitiously restored to life and left to make a getaway on their own they could not hope to advance very far before being pursued by the outraged princess and returned to bondage anyway.

“Excellent,” declared the cat and was just about to add a well-worded peroration of gratification at the outcome, when suddenly the room was full of butterflies again, driven back in wild confusion from all outdoors.

“What—!” yelled various voices but that was as far as they got when a plague of locusts burst through the open window and settled with a roar of wings on everything in the room. Thick and fast they came at last and more and more and more, while the horrified former tenants of the apartment fled in panic: into the interior of the Palace of Magic: away from the dread scourge.

The two cats led the way, swift-footed, Bungle hissing to Eureka: “To the queen’s chamber! She can settle this too!”

Along the hallway they raced, up the grand staircase, along another corridor, around the corner, twenty yards on, and straight through the (fortunately!) ajar-standing door of Ozma’s private apartment.

The pink kitten made no bones about flashing across the room and scabbling her way up the pink satin folds of hanging window drapes and hiding in the flounces at the top. Bungle, with somewhat more aplomb, skidded to a stop in front of the Princess’ comfortable little informal sitting-room throne.

“Ma’am! Quick! Your wand! There’s a horde of locusts coming!” And with no further ceremony Bungle ducked under the throne.

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Ozma, momentarily startled, was soon mistress of the situation. She felt down beside the cushion of her chair and pulled forth a crystal staff (she never stayed at home without it). Seconds later whirring insects were invading her ear poppies and in a trice had reduced them to tatters. Twirling her wand in air yellow-brown with horrid seething life she (too) enunciated "Pyrzqxgl!", added some even more powerful witching words, and ended with a wish that every insect within the palace and its precincts should undergo instant paralysis.

With a whush and a clatter the floor of the boudoir was suddenly knee deep in motionless locusts. Unfortunately, in her haste the good princess had worded her wish unwisely and the butterflies and a certain little ladybeetle also lay here and there about the palace, stunned. It was the work of the entire palace staff later in the afternoon and far into the night to sift the drifts of grasshoppers and separate out all other more innocuous insects and bring them for deparalyzation. By then our larger heroes had left town.

Ozma plucked from her hair her ravished headdress and cast it aside. "Whew!" she breathed. "Whatever was that?"

Rod Litenin, adventurer, made his way forward, crushing, alas, in his passage hundreds of living locusts. Ozma delicately covered her ears to hold out the sickening sound and looked at him askance.

"That'll be my fault, ma'am," he confessed, bashed. While the members of The Ozma Association and our various heroes, large and small, shifted uneasily, not daring to take a step amid the waste of locusts, he retailed the whole shameful story, which boiled down to the fact that wherever he went calamities followed. "Plagues, holocausts, revolutions, you name it: wherever I go they happen. That's why I've been a wanderer. Not exactly to try to get away from them. I knew that was hopeless. But just to spread out the misery a bit. It hardly seemed fair to stay put and let all the disasters happen in one place."

"Hm, this news is grave indeed," opined Ozma. She signed

for the Cowardly Lion to brush away with his tail tuft a few hoppers that had got on her royal chair cushion and then resumed her seat. "I'm afraid I can't, in that case, ask you to reside here at the palace, as your standing as a very unusual personage might well suggest. In fact, to be perfectly fair—and I am as fair as I am powerful," she reminded all the company, "I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to live outside Oz rather than in it."

Rod Litenin looked solemn. Actually, he looked like he was about to cry: in other words, the way Lincoln looks it all his pictures. He'd heard about how just Ozma was but, hadn't in fact expected her to be as just as this. Or rather "just?" That wasn't really the word to describe how this princess behaved. It was more 'high-handed but with the general good in view.' He remembered the fate of the Kalidahs and was no longer surprised.

But the Girl Ruler was going on. "But of course you must live somewhere. It would not be just to destroy you simply to reduce the incidence of floods and earthquakes in Oz. We must think of a place... Ah, I have it. Not all the deserts surrounding this country are deadly. Indeed, my own transfiguration into my present form took place on one of the deserts, separated from the burning sands by only the thickness of a carpet. *There* might be a spot for you in which to reside. I could provide a little oasis: some trees, a spring, and of course provisions sent in. Shall we say that? Whirlwinds and droughts would hardly be noticed there, avalanches and blizzards scarcely to be expected, and floods, I should think, precluded."

Litenin hardly knew what to say. Then he heard a crushing of locusts behind him and felt a thin hand slipped into his. He turned to the woman at his side.

"A book of verses underneath the bough,
a loaf of bread, a jug of wine,
and thou beside me singing in the wilderness?
Ah, wilderness were paradise, Barr-Tau."

Everybody, except, curiously, the condemned man himself, was looking close to tears, perhaps the glass cat least so, for she was heard to murmur smugly, "How *just* can you get?" But one person was wailing at the top of his voice, though only briefly, for his jaws soon rusted shut and he could only sob in a strangled gurgle.

"The Tin Woodman?" said Eureka the kitten. "What's he crying so hard for? He hardly knows Rod—if at all."

But the mystery was soon solved. The Scarecrow, treading as lightly as anyone was capable of over the heaped insects, stepped to Nick Chopper's side, took from his head the oil-can he used as a hat, and oiled his friend's jaws.

"Oh, thank you, Scare'ks," the woodman murmured low, and started crying again.

"Pardon me, my friend, but why are you weeping?" said the Scarecrow as he continued to pump oil. "Even Mr. Litenin, the person most concerned, is bearing up."

"It's these poor locusts!" cried Nick amidst his sobs. "They've been stepped upon right and left! Oh, don't move, I pray you! Even your light weight, Scarecrow, can be maiming to the little creatures. And Mr. Rod must have crushed hundreds just walking up to our Ruler's chair. Oh, whatever will I do?! It's so tragic."

This was a different way of looking at the situation, but it gave the Girl Ruler an idea. "I had been wondering," she announced graciously, "how to deal with the problem. I think I see a way. I shall give orders at once for the palace staff to sweep up the insects—as gently as may be—and load them on wagons. About sixty vehicles should do, I fancy, based on the creatures' thickness on the ground in this room. Then we'll have the wagons hauled to your castle at Winkiezia, Your Imperiality," she addressed the Emperor of the Winkies, "and you can take care of the locusts there. Will that be all right?"

Nick Chopper suddenly stopped crying and looked grave. But certainly not he nor anyone could fault the fairness of his

Queen's decision.

"Meanwhile," Ozma went on, "let's try to get through into the bedroom next door." She rose and led the way, employing a sort of sweeping-aside foot-shuffle. "Luckily the doors there were all closed, so we ought to be able to move freely within."

As it happened, the Princess had no throne in her bedroom (though there was one in the little room just off it), so she sat on the state bed and all the members of The Ozma Association plus visitors followed and grouped themselves respectfully about her. "That's better," said Her Highness. "And now, what was it you were coming to see me about? For I take it that your pursuit by the locusts determined only your speed, not your direction?"

"Wise Majesty!" the little Wizard could not help praising as he took charge. "Quite right. A matter of some slight gravity has arisen. We crave Your Highness' just judgment in the affair. I am afraid yet another—or others—are going to be grieved by your decision, whichever way it may go. But the issue must needs be settled." Here he looked round to catch the eye of Princess Dorothy, who looked back in some bewilderment.

"The matter is thus." Mr. Diggs related the history of the Dainty China Countrymen from the word Go, ending with an account of how, through no fault of their own, a dozen of the harmless ceramic people, immobilized by a dread un-spell, had ended up in Princess Dorothy's china cabinet.

For once, and only very momentarily, Queen Ozma bit her lip. She cast just one solemn glance at her best friend and then she said, "The case is clear. There can only be one decision. Of course the china people must be restored to life—and freedom."

She held out her hand toward Dorothy. "My dear, I'm so sorry—"

But Dorothy shrieked, "Oh, Ozma!" threw her arm across her eyes, and rushed, sobbing, from the room. (She ran into a drift of locusts but she didn't let that stop her.)

Edward, Prince of Wates, and Rod Litenin, stalwarts both, between them carried the dainty china people's luggage, a small trunk. The chinas were not with it but in it. The trunk had a thick rubber floor and lining and there were little leather rings attached inside to hold onto, so unless the figurines lurched against *each other* there was nothing to break themselves on during their journey. For the sake of the congenial company, Toby the pug, though so much larger, rode in there with them.

The Wizard of Oz led the way as the party from Quadlinga, stepping around heaps of grasshoppers, went down to a side door leading out of the Palace. It was with some surprise that the little old fellow opened and found young Princess Dorothy leaning with one foot up against the outside wall.

Hastily the princess dropped the foot and faced Mr. Diggs. "Wizard!" she said urgently with no preamble at all, "let me go with you! I'm fed up. I want to get away!"

"But, my dear Princess!" exclaimed her friend, who knew her tendency to crash other people's adventures and did not want to encourage the habit. Then he saw the tear stains on her face and did not have the heart to refuse. "Yes, of course you can come. Yes, it will do you good to get away for a bit."

Dorothy at once brightened a little and said, "I asked the Scarecrow to come along too, but funny: he said no. He said he'd 'rest on his laurels a little'. Anyway I guess the others would think it was queer if two members of T.O.A.D.I.E.S. decamped at once. But I just couldn't go to another meeting—not for a while."

"Don't think about its dear. Glinda will be glad to see you. And perhaps—well, we'll see: perhaps something new and fun for you will turn up."

The Wizard hardly thought it would be quite the thing for Dorothy to intrude on the gala homecoming of the chinas to Dainty China Country, nor was it likely that the young lady would be welcomed as a member of the wedding when Rod

and Lady Stella headed into exile. He'd see if he could wangle an invitation for the girl to join the Prince of Wates for sightseeing as the latter set his course for his native isle.

As the pair crossed the lawn the Wizard made occasion to deliver Dorothy into the company of the Woozy, whom she had taken a liking to upon their making acquaintance a week before. Himself, he had to warn Rod and the prince to see to it that the chinas' trunk got stowed in the *other* chariot than that which the American princess would travel in. No use putting painful reminders in people's way.

"You don't look any too cheerful either, Mr. Woozy," said Dorothy by way of making conversation. "What's the matter?"

"I've lost my pink butterflies," mourned the square blue animal. "They disappeared the time we all ran for our lives from the locusts. I hate leaving without them but the others said there isn't time to look for them under the piles of other insects. I do hope they'll be all right."

"I wouldn't worry if I were you," comforted Dorothy. "They can't die—in Oz—and some day you may meet them again. It's not as if anybody's said you *mustn't* be with them... when you love them..."

"Well, but of course I didn't want to *own* them—" And then the poor Woozy could have bitten off his tongue for his thoughtlessness. He blushed purple in the late afternoon light and tried to think of something to say to retrieve his gaffe but failed.

Dorothy rather abruptly parted from the Woozy and joined the humans boarding chariot number one. The Wizard had gone to the other swan vehicle to keep an eye on the trunk and all the animals went along with him. The Glass Cat, rallying quickly from her pretend transformation into a modest subdued creature, had several spiteful thins to say. "Can you beat it?" she exclaimed, staring across at the other chariot. "There's that girl again, horning in on another adventure. But anyway I see she's had the grace to leave that awful dog at home."

"Hooray for Dorothy," said the pink kitten mildly. "Now you've got to give her points for that, Bungle. She's clever enough

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to see how popular *he'd* be, dumped down among us."

"Now we mustn't be catty," reproved the Woozy and knew he'd blundered again. His friends were getting quite used to seeing him purple. This time, however, he did think of a thing to say to win back some terrain: "Er—um—how smart of you, Bungle, to be so sure how the case of the china people would turn out."

Bungle, at least, condescended to be mollified.

"Why, sure," she said. "It's all I've heard proclaimed from the house-tops for a week or more: how *just* that princess is. There was only one *just* solution to that affair."

The pink kitten joined in the era of forgiveness and good feeling. "Right, Bung. You were on the ball there. Now we can all leave smelling like roses, as we wouldn't have if we'd liberated Dorothy's toys without a by-your-leave."

But the glass cat, unregenerate, had the last word: "Right, Reke—and gave that stuck-up Kansas girl one in the eye at the same time."

c h a p t e r t h i r t y - t h r e e

Glinda the Good was glad to see her friends and acquaintances back again and listened with attention to various ones' accounts of triumphs and defects. She praised the fairness of all Ozma's decisions but had words of kindness for Princess Dorothy and Rod Litenin, chief sufferers by the Girl Ruler's equitableness.

"Have a holiday here," she invited, "before you go on: the one into exile, the other to—we would hope—a meeting of reconciliation."

"Oh, thank you, Glinda," (Dorothy took a particular delight in calling rulers by their first name, not by honorifics) "but I don't know that I'll never be reconciled. How could Ozma do that to me?, her best friend! It's not as if I were *hurting* the figurines. Why, I get Jellia to dust and polish them faithfully once a week."

The red ruler on her throne looked at the girl just a little quizzically. "That was indeed most considerate of you, my dear." I'm afraid the good witch was being just the least bit ironical but Dorothy, secure in the rightness of her stance, didn't notice a thing.

Rod Litenin for his part also gave thanks but declined Glinda's invitation. "I guess Lady Stella and I'll get along to the desert. She says she's rather looking forward to it. She thinks the heat and dryness will be good for her catarrh. All those years in that dank tower haven't been healthy."

"Perhaps you're wise," agreed Glinda. "You'll go on to the south directly then? not—er, to the northeast first?" She didn't like, in Dorothy's hearing, to refer to the china country by name.

"Oh, our good friend, Edward of Wates, has decided he can spare the extra day to accompany our other friends that far," informed Rod. In fact, he was again being a bit disingenuous. He and the Prince had fixed up the little deception privately. They knew that the chinas were not keen to make their triumphal return home in the company of a young person who, though

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no doubt in all innocence, had kept so many of them in confinement for so many years. Yet the others of the larger party (well, most of them) could not find it in their hearts to abandon the girl who so declaratively had chosen to join them.

It was always possible, of course, that Princess Dorothy would insensitively insist on going along to the Dainty China Country, but they thought she might choose a more diplomatic course, and that is what she did. "Oh, fine," she said to Rod, "I'll join you and Stella... if I may!", never doubting for a moment that she would be accepted. And of course she was.

So the brief but pleasant house party broke up next morning early. Just in time actually. The little group of Rod Litenin and his escort of two titled ladies had no sooner got beyond the first ridge to the south, out of sight of the Pink Palace, than a typhoon swept down and carried them away.

"Hm," mused Rod as he was buffeted along a mile a minute, "first time there's been one of these for a while. Still, I'm glad it waited to happen until we'd got away from Sorceress Glinda's. I wouldn't like it to have done any damage there. Or Prince Edward and the collection of china!" Rod shivered in spite of himself. After that he stopped worrying and resolved to wait calmly—as calmly as one could while turning head over heels in a screaming wind—and see what the future would bring. He dreamed of Stella with the bright red hair.

The two ladies of his company were not able to take the terror so philosophically, having had no or little experience of such storms. Fortunately, perhaps, Lady Stella struck her head on something in the first instants of the descent of the great wind and, unconscious, suffered no fright or awareness of discomfort until, an hour later, the storm, losing force, dropped her on a sand dune. It was different for Dorothy. She knew well enough what was happening to her! but last time, at least, she had had the comfort of a house about her. She found it was greatly different to be tumbled end over end in direct contact with the wind and she could not help being concerned. Her only consolation was the thought that she had left Toto at home in

the Palace of Magic. Here he would be just one more thing to worry about. And suddenly the green palace in the Emerald City began to look pretty good to her as a place to be.

Eventually of course the typhoon blew itself out, as typhoons do. Dorothy and Rod were thrown violently into, respectively, a lake and the tops of a forest tree. Both were glad at that moment of the prevalence of deathlessness in Oz. The bruises they sustained were enough to be going on with. Dorothy swam and Rod climbed, though all the while the two of them would far rather have been taking it easy, nursing their wounds.

“Durn!” said Princess Ozma, who rarely swore. She had just discovered that the Woozy, Eureka the kitten, the life-sized china pug, and the Glass Cat had made a getaway for the second time without having had a dressing-down for the first. The girl ruler was exhausted, having been up all night directing the efforts of the clean-up crew who were shoveling locusts into bins and boxes and loading them onto carts. (In the end there were only fifty-seven of the latter.) At last at dawn’s first light she had been able to stagger—but still gracefully—to bed. But she couldn’t sleep.

Perhaps her many decisions during the previous eventful day weighed heavily upon her. None of them seemed to have been popular, nor, consequently, made her any more popular. The Ojo boy and his uncle had turned down her friendly offer of a house in the suburbs and the chance to come often to court and see *her*. The crooked magician, Dr. Pipt, had naturally felt chastened and Ozma could not expect that she had made points with him or his wife. Dorothy had gone to her room in tears! Rod Litenin, that tall gaunt fellow, had obviously not been best pleased by his condemnation to exile but he had put a good face on it; nice man—but there you were!: for the good of the realm he had had to be banished. And finally, to be free of the creature’s cynicism and haughtiness, Ozma had had to do violence to the Glass Cat’s very nature.

Was there *no* one who had been pleased by what she had done that day? The queen sat up in bed, frowned, and tried to think.

Of course! The Woozy, that amusing animal. She had promised him lots to eat. *He* must be feeling grateful and pleased. She would send for him. A little conversation with the appreciative—and rather charming—beast would soothe her spirits and allow her to sleep.

She pulled the bell cord. While Ozma waited she happened to think: actually she hadn’t seen the Woozy since the end of the

tribunal held right here in this very bedroom. Nor any of the other animals! But of course they would only have been in the way at the cleaning-up of the locust mess. "Unless they had taken to eating any!" The princess had read somewhere that locusts were edible, although the source didn't say by whom.

But there was Jellia Jamb's timid knock at the door and the little maid entered.

"Sorry to bother you, dear, at this hour but is the Woozy awake?" asked Ozma, ending with a yawn.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Will you send him to me?"

Jellia Jamb looked puzzled, even a little startled. "Er, how can I, Your Grace? He's gone."

"Gone'!?" Ozma sat bolt upright. "Gone where? You've just said he was awake—"

"Oh!" gasped the maid. "I thought you said 'away'! He is away—along with the rest of the menagerie. I saw them heading for the side entrance with that man who smelled so bad, and the others—oh, about four o'clock."

That was why Ozma said "Durn." But she didn't intend to lose any further dignity in front of the maid so she smothered her annoyance and instead said, "Oh, never mind. Bring me a sleeping draught." And with a degree of disgruntledness unusual in one so lovely and universally adored she swallowed the potion, said "Good night," and turned on her side.

The Queen slept. No one knocked on her chamber door. They knew how just she was. It was only *just* that she sleep long and deep after her labors of the day and night preceding. Hence it was going on noon when Ozma finally awoke.

Again she rang for Jellia and said, "Please send Princess Dorothy to me."

"The Princess?" said Jellia, perplexed. "Oh, gosh, she's left town."

Once more it was Queen Ozma's fate to sit bolt upright and let out a squaw... "'Left town'!?! But how could she?! How could she have the heart—" Suddenly the Queen of Oz burst into tears.

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“Oh, how unkind! Not even to let me know.” She was forfeiting dignity with a vengeance now.

Jellia Jamb was close to tears herself. Toto had come to her hours before with the news that the door to his mistress’ bedroom was shut and he hadn’t been able to get in no matter how much he scratched, barked, and whined. Jellia went to have a look-see and sure enough, the princess’ bed hadn’t been slept in. The maid thought it odd that she hadn’t been informed but not ‘til this moment did she suspect that nor had their beloved ruler. Enquiries had revealed that the Scarecrow and the Patchwork Girl had seen the popular Kansas girl entering a swan chariot but neither had they been aware that the departure was completely impromptu and unannounced.

When Ozma had soaked a large handkerchief to repletion she dried her eyes on the pillow-case and sent for the Scarecrow. Oh, yes, admitted the stuffed fellow, he had been aware that Dorothy was going off at short notice with her old pal, the wizard Diggs. She had even suggested that he himself go along. But that she had been so thoughtless as not to let her dear friend and sovereign know —!

However the wise straw man sensed that harping on the favorite’s faithlessness was not the way to rescue Ozma from her depression. Let her attention be called to business! With a matter to tackle that called on her resources of power and justice she would perhaps earliest come round and be cheerful again.

“I’m glad you sent for me, your highness,” he stated. “I had hoped to have an audience as soon as you had awakened. A question has come up that may again require the employment of your world-famous justice and power—”

“If you don’t mind, Scarecrow dear,” said the Ruler, “I’d just as soon you didn’t draw any further attention to my possession of those two commodities. What did you want to see me about?”

“It’s one of the least of your subjects. She requests the boon of a few words with Your Majesty. It’s a certain Miss Lurabelle Ladybeetle. It seems she, together with all other insects, suf-

ferred in the general paralysis you ordered laid on yesterday. She's just been discovered—on an aspidistra in the chamber they've begun calling the 'Butterfly Room'."

"Let her come to me," ordained the gracious queen, the least of whose subjects could claim her careful attention. So far no germs or viruses had asked for an audience but when they did Ozma was ready.

Miss Ladybeetle received the summons and flew into the royal bedroom with a nervous whirl of wings.

"Oh, Your Highness!" she gasped, genuflecting. "I'm so glad to be allowed to see you."

For ease of communication Ozma here desired the beetle to advance and perch on her fingertip. "What was it you wanted?" she enquired.

"First, actually, just the honor of an audience," confessed Lurabelle. Stella Stick-Insect would be pea-green with envy when she found out. "And then, secondly, to ask for information: in fact, in short: where *is* everybody?"

Ozma too was aware of the echoing silence in the palace. Her maid, the Scarecrow, and the Patchwork Girl were making what cheerful noise they could out in the corridor. But it wasn't enough.

"I'm afraid everyone with any physical strength," explained the ruler, "has gone off with the locust carts. To pull them to Winkiezia, you know. We haven't any horses in Oz—except the Sawhorse and old Jim, the cab-horse, who of course are duly taking part—so *people* have to do the job."

"Oh, I see," said Lurabelle. "Yes, the straw man told me about the locusts. What pests. I tried to warn them not to follow us but they would insist. They said they'd represent a physical deterrent just in case our diplomatic mission didn't pan out. But I was sure it would."

"'Diplomatic mission'?" said Ozma, confused. "What diplomatic mission was that?"

So Lurabelle Ladybug had to recount the whole story: how she had got wind of the threat to a yellow butterfly and had

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mobilized her friends to avert the catastrophe. In well-chosen words she related the tale of her swanborne flight to the west, brought greetings to the Princess Regnant of Oz from her devoted subject Lana Peethisaw, described the trials of thirst and fatigue she and her escort had endured, told of the enlisting of other insect tribes to spread the warning, spoke of the enthusiasm of, particularly, the locusts, who, it proved, had not been sufficiently dissuaded from launching an airborne assault on all humans who might be intent on wing-snatching—

“Let me get this straight!” begged the girl ruler. “*You* brought the locusts here? even though inadvertently. But I made sure that one Rod Litenin, a wanderer of no fixed address, was responsible. He confessed it himself! and listed any number of disasters that had dogged his trail lifelong: floods, earthquakes, avalanches, volcano eruptions, storms, epidemics, revolutions, pogroms, not to mention blizzards, cloudbursts, and outbreaks of popular madness—”

“I’m sorry, Your Majesty,” put in Lurabelle, “but Mr. Litenin can’t claim credit for the plague of locusts. That was all my doing and I regret it bitterly. I know what a trial they’ve been to you.”

“So much for my vaunted justice!” exclaimed Ozma and looked fiercely at her track record.

There was a pause while both sovereign and subject looked glum and wondered what they could do to right matters. “I’ll simply have to go after them,” decided Ozma at last. “Oh, but drat!” there she was, almost swearing again—“the Sawhorse—not to mention the Cowardly Lion, the Hungry Tiger, the Cabhorse, and everybody else who might have given me a ride—has gone off with the locust wagons!”

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

One tool for advancing her purposes Queen Ozma did command. That was her Magic Picture.

Carrying Miss Ladybeetle with her, the princess rounded up the few attendants who remained hanging uneasily about her chamber door: the Scarecrow, the new favorite Scraps, Dorothy's dog Toto, and Jellia, the faithful maid-servant. They all proceeded to the Hall of the Picture. There Ozma desired to see what her truant friend Miss Gale was doing.

I'm afraid the view didn't help Queen Ozma's peace of mind. Where she confidently expected to see the American princess living it up at the court of the reed Ruler, Glinda (whither she of course knew the swan chariots had been returning) Ozma instead got an aghast sight of her friend limping along a red road, totally alone, her Alice blue trial-attending gown all bedraggled and covered with red mud, and on her face the most woebe-gone expression her chum had ever seen there.

"Aa-ee!" keened the queen in utter grief. Her best friend still so loved despite apparent betrayal—in such a plight and she, Ozma, able to do nothing for her. Desperately she grabbed at and waved her wand but that did no good. The wand's power was effective upon persons and things in its wielder's immediate to vicinity but there was no way to beam its influence to something at a far distance whose location was not even known.

There were magic implements and compounds in quantity available on shelves and in cupboards about the Palace of (nota bene) Magic, but they had for many years been the province of the Wizard, O.Z. Diggs, and fairy Ozma had practically forgotten how to use them, if she *ever* knew. Ozma's role had never been that of great enchanter. She kept her wand chiefly for polite little parlor charming. And the Wizard was away.

"Oh, quick, Picture!" implored the Princess, not even stopping to recite an incantation or short verse such as was generally used to heighten the ceremony of invocation of the powers of the painting. "Show me the Wizard of Oz!"

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Whew. Anyway that was a relief. There was seen Wizard Diggs sitting cozily beside the red sorceress Glinda at the latter's workbench in the atelier at the Pink Palace. They had some sketch-plans laid out before them and the witch appeared to be explaining to her apprentice the mysteries of the pentagram.

At once Ozma tuned in on Glinda on her two-way wrist radio. Or tried to. Impatiently she tapped the royal foot. Then with a frown she looked again at the magic picture. Rats! (well, you couldn't really call that swearing) the Red Witch was clearly seen not to be wearing her matching wrist instrument! How tiresome.

Balked again, and puzzled by the unaccompanied leisurely look of the two in the workroom, the princess commanded the picture to show her—oh, the exile, Rod Litenin.

The red scene faded, though only in contours, not in color. The view was still rosy but now it was of yet another country road and there was another woebegone-looking wanderer. But whereas the lost Princess Dorothy's attire had been seen to be chiefly distinguished by dampness, dirt, and disorder, Rod Litenin's was dry but in tatters. What in the world had happened to these people? And where was Rod's firm friend and companion Lady Stella?

It was natural for the little queen to ask to see that persona as well. Her mystification grew. The Barr-Tau was sitting on a dune staring out to sand. She looked very desolate. It was clear from the view in the painting, which was of desert to the horizon's end, that the lady was not even in Oz. Ozma's desperation grew. This was simply awful.

She wished to see the Woozy, and here at last she hit the jackpot. There was the amiable animal, also footborne along a red road, but in his company two cats (one of glass), a dog (one of china), and a towering Prince who carried on his shoulder with ease a leather-bound trunk. Hallelujah: at least some of the girl ruler's acquaintances had not been struck by disaster. But there was no way of communicating with them and presently the princess let the scene fade.

'Now thinky, thinky!' Ozma said to herself. 'There must be

some way to get help.’ Some distance away, far down in the Palace gardens, not far from Lake Quad, Timothy Inchworm, ham-sending on his own two-way mind ‘radio’, picked up her thoughts.

“‘Help’?” he thought, and continued to listen in as the Queen spoke (and, unlike common mortals, continued to think as she talked) to her worried courtiers.

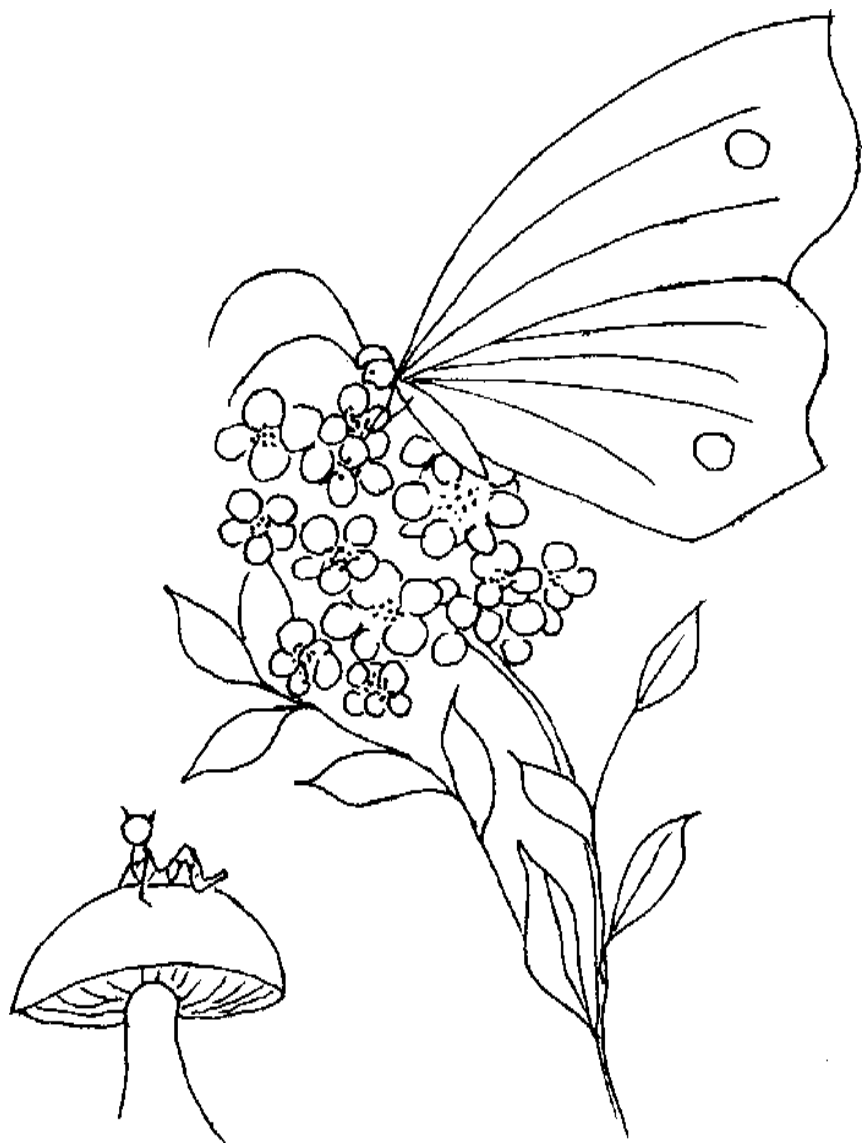
“Scarecrow, my friend,” pleaded Ozma. “Put on your thinking cap. How can I get myself out of *this* fix? *And* all our poor suffering friends. Somehow we’ve got to get word to Sorceress Glinda—and assistance to the others.”

Now Timothy could hear *two* people thinking and the thoughts came in loud and clear. Everybody’s (and Timothy’s) Queen needed a message sent! And who was better equipped to carry a message than all the inch-worm’s winged friends in the garden?! He’d pass the word at once!

Oh, but heck. He could only go an inch at a time, and there was nobody within inches. Or wait! Yes, there was. That awful, lazy, all-devouring green caterpillar that nobody liked. What was her name? Clara! And Tim had noticed her not half an hour ago, stuffing herself two twigs away on the Snow Queen bush. Greedy thing! She’d burst one of these days, the way she guffed it in.

Timothy crawled to the edge of his leaf. Great Scott! she *was* bursting! The caterpillar’s green carapace had split down the center of her back and there was seen emerging—were those wings? Was that an antenna? Goodness gracious, a great rose-colored butterfly was emerging to gorgeous life where had been before a morose unspeaking slimy green near-slug. The effect was electrifying.

And there! *There* was his messenger. “Hey!” squeaked the inchworm. “You there! Clara? Well, I don’t know what your name is as a Rose Feather-Wing but never mind. Will you carry a message to—umm, oh, of course, the very one!: Gloria Swan? Down on the lake! Just over there!” He wagged his head east by north. “Oh, I know you don’t know her, but don’t stand on ceremony! You’ll recognize her by the troop of cygnets trailing after her.



Tell her it's an emergency. Can she fly to the palace of Witch Glinda the Good and say Princess Ozma wants to talk to her?"

"I will," spoke the pink butterfly and they mere worthy words to be the first she ever uttered. She took her first steps out of the discarded and now shriveling shell that had won her no friends and poised for a moment on the edge of the leaf as the inch-worm cried,

"Oh, hurry. Please!"

Meanwhile the pins and needles were sticking out of the Scarecrow's brain fit to bristle. This was as hard and fast as he'd ever thought in his life. The four females were thinking too (I don't know about Toto) but it was the ex-ruler of Oz in his own right who had the brilliant thought.

"Is not Your Highness able to transport, by finger magic, goods to the weight of eleven and a half pounds whithersoever you wish?"

"Why, yes," said Ozma. "I did that last—oh, I know: the time I sent the Yellow Hen to seek assistance from the Queen of the Fairies."^s

"And now?" pursued the scarecrow, waiting for the penny to drop.

"You, Scarecrow? But—" Ozma was being, slowish.

"Alas," the straw man cut her off, "I've been stuffing on heavier sort of hay recently—just for variety. I weigh thirteen pounds. But there is another..."

All eyes turned as one to the blushing Lurabelle Ladybird.

"Of course!" they all cried.

"Oh, Miss Ladybeetle," said the Queen of Oz. "Would you consider—"

"Of course!" declared Lurabelle in her turn. And Ozma went on about what she desired the amiable little insect to do.

§ See *A Fairy Queen in Oz*. Editor's note.

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c h a p t e r t h i r t y - s i x

Rod Litenin was all at sixes and sevens. He might even have done some figure eights, so disoriented was he, but there was no ice at this season.

He'd clambered down out of the life-saving sycamore little the worse off, aside from his trashed toggery, from his time of blowing in the wind. But he was grieved and greatly worried at what might have been the fate of his dear Barr-Tau. What in the world ought he to do now? Where should he make for? Whom should he try to find in order to get help?

Well for a start it was a case of getting out of the woods. He blundered about among the trees trying to get his bearings. It was just as well that it was too soon yet for any further manifestation of his leit-motif of disasters and he thought he need not fear a forest fire for the time being. He was feeling half dead so he set his course by half-dead reckoning and in a little time, sure enough, he came on a faint woodsmen's path. Then, following that, he came out of the forest upon a road.

His thoughts had clarified enough by now for him to realize that the home of Glinda the Good was the only sensible p(a)lace to head for. But in what direction did it lie? He'd had the distinct impression that the typhoon had blown them southeast and so he planned to aim northwest. The road (unsurprisingly) offered a choice of two directions. He struck off left.

As usual the roads of Oz seemed quite deserted. Rod had plodded for an hour without encountering anything of note and then curiously the landscape began to seem somehow familiar. In another half hour he was certain: of course! He was not far at all from Rubber World! Or what had *been* Rubber World.

Rod recalled the sky-high flames that had started from his mart, the stinking smoke that had poured from his emporium. It had been too cruel. He'd seized a hat and run off into the night. He would not watch the foregone conclusion.

But now eight years had passed. Time healed all things so he didn't cling to his fear. After all, he recalled, spring hadn't been late

that year! He could bear to look again without anguish upon the scene of triumphs and an ultimate defeat. He'd go and see.

Yep, there was the familiar signpost at the crossroads. There, the gnarled oak that had served as gallows in the bad old time of wars and oppression. And there—but wait! There was a waste expanse where weeds had grown up knee high, but what miracle was this? Seventy yards beyond stood two long low buildings of a dark green-red that Litenin recognized as his stock depots B and C. A was gone but the rains of eight years had washed the remaining two structures free of even any traces of scorching.

With a wild surmise he ran towards stockroom B and flung aside the high slide door. No one ever locked doors in Oz except Dorothy Gale, once, and she didn't know where she was. The door worked perfectly. It wasn't even corroded or grown stiff through the ravages of many years' weather. So much for the damage done by the fire!

Within, in exemplary tidy array, stretched virtual acres of rubber goods waiting calmly, if in vain, to be dispensed to needing customers. Why, they weren't even very dusty, so securely did the snug-sitting doors keep out everything but people. And Quadlings never stole.

After just one gaping glance around Rod Litenin sat down on the doorway ledge and fell into thought.

He'd been too hasty by half. If he had never run off in despair he might have built up his business again and been quite happy. The fire had not been the total disaster he'd assumed. And think of the miseries of all those years on the road that he'd have been spared: the weary miles walked, the wakings in wet haystacks on rainy mornings, the loneliness. Ah, but without all those he'd never have found Stella Barr-Tau either. He knew it had been all right. Well, almost. Was his customary luck holding? Was his dear lady dead, or anyway destroyed? Would he ever see her again?

Meanwhile, there was one good deed he could do before he set out once more to follow—if he could find—the trail of the loved and lost one to the world's end.

Gloria Swan received with equanimity the message brought by the rose Featherwing (who, during her brief flight, had elected to use the name of “Felicia Featherwing”). “More courier duty?” said Madam Swan. “Oh, I think my husband is up to it.” She put out a black foot and poked the soundly sleeping cob beside her. “He was exhausted but he’s had a fine long sleep. It’s time he was awake.”

Swen grumbled but agreed to undertake the additional excursion down south to the Pink Palace. “The Princess wants the Good Sorceress to get in touch. That’s all?”

“Well,” inserted his mate, “you could give her the latest news.”

“Such as?”

“What Bettina Butterfly reported about the turmoil in the Palace of Magic. The invasion of the locusts and the temporary paralysis of *all* insect life. It sounded quite exciting. I’m sure the Good Witch would like to know.” Mrs. Gloria had no way of knowing that the Wizard, O.Z. Diggs, had already carried such tidings to Glinda—*and* with the assistance of (distant) cousins of Gloria’s own. “But wait, I’ve got a better idea. Bettina was around here just a little while ago. She shouldn’t be far off. See if you can catch sight of her, Swen, as you lake off. She could go along and tell her own story of her escape from the palace.”

The swans turned to give thanks to and take leave of the helpful Felicia Featherwing, who now remained rather at loose ends. Then Swen himself had a good idea. “Two butterfly passengers are no more trouble than one. Want to go along?” And the eager but inexperienced Felicia jumped at the chance to broaden her horizon.

But it was all in vain—or might have been.

When the wide-winged champion landed on the duck pond in the barnyard behind the pink palace of Witch Glinda and his two butterfly companions wriggled out of his shoulder feathers

and flew off to wait upon the enchantress, they found their news was stale.

"What!?" they whispered (which is about as loud as a butterfly can exclaim). "Not one but *two* parties have got here ahead of us? Who's in the second one?" For Bettina remembered very well from the dramatic scenes in the Butterfly Room at the royal palace the little Wizard of Oz who now stood attending on the red ruler at her chair of state.

"Princess Ozma sent me a little ambassador," replied Glinda with a smile. "She brought us right up to the minute on developments at the Emerald City and woke me up to proper attention to my radio!"

Here the witch briefly flashed her wrist under its loose lace frill.

"Who was it?" Bettina still demanded to know.

"Why, a redoubtable little lady-insect by the name of Lurabelle."

"Lurabelle Ladybug!" shrieked (well, tried to) Bettina Butterfly. "My great chum! Where is she?! I lost track of her the time we were all thrown under that fell spell at the Queen's Palace. I never ever got to say goodbye before refugeeing south. Where is she? I pray you, say!"

Glinda looked grave. "It was Miss Lurabelle who brought us word of a great disaster: one taking place just over the ridge a few miles from here, and I knew nothing about it! What with all the excitement I hadn't been devoting proper attention to the Book of Records either. But Queen Ozma had learned of some sort of cataclysm (a typhoon, I now discover) that had separated one party of travelers who had been my guests here just last night. I hurried to take a look at the great Book and found out, what Ozma had not been able to learn, *where* the poor survivors were—"

"And Lurabelle?" broke in the two rose-colored messengers, more interested in the whereabouts of one of their own genus and an acquaintance to boot.

"I can do a little finger magic of my own," stated the red

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witch modestly. "Indeed, I can send up to *twelve* pounds. Lurabelle was eager to carry on being helpful and when I ascertained that Lady Stella, the Barr-Tau, seemed to be the typhoon victim who was in the sorriest plight—"

"I know a 'Stella'!" said Bettina. "Stella Stick-Insect. And that reminds me: Lurabelle—"

"Yes, the little messenger mentioned that she knew one Stella, just before she went to meet another. I sent her off—oh, twenty minutes ago, to take word to the stranded Lady that we'd be along to rescue her as soon as—well, we've got our act together. The Wizard here and I have been finalizing plans for rounding up all the various lost and strayed. It's a problem in logistics. There are just the two of us to drive swan chariots but there are four parties to be assisted."

"And those are?" put in young Felicia.

"The Barr-Tau, of course; her friend Rod Litenin; our own Princess Dorothy; and finally the party including the Dainty China Countrymen, who could probably use a little help. Thinking it over, I recalled that that bunch, though returning home in triumph after thirteen years in exile, were no further along toward being able to come with the problems that drove them from home in the first place. Now, Mr. Diggs, will you pick up Dorothy and Rod, or would you advise going first to Lady Stella and then on to Mr. Litenin? Or shall—"

"Your Ruffidity," broke in Bettina Butterfly, using an archaic tern of address for exalted persons of a red color; it is not known whence she had it. "Can you make things small?"

"Small?" Glinda stopped in mid-proposal. "Why, yes within reason. What had you in mind?"

"Now we're here we'd like to be some use," said the lepidopt. "And we've got our own swan, with chariot built in. If you could put some powdered minifier in a pouch that could be slung round our swan's neck, Felicia and I could go rescue the er, Barr-Tau. And save you one trip, you see."

"Well thought upon!" exclaimed the Good sorceress, delighted. "Most resourceful of you, my dear," she praised the

(always) blushing butterfly. "So let it be! And where shall we four meet again?"

"In thunder, lightning, or in rain, I dare say," opined the Wizard, "if Mr. Rod is also to be of the party."

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c h a p t e r t h i r t y - e i g h t

The red Ruler of the South officiated at the formal opening of the new wooden stairway that she had authorized—and also built, by magic means—to enable the citizens of the Dainty China Country to break out of their period of isolation. Not that the chinas themselves were going to be wanting to do all that much sallying forth into the outer world. Their one essay in that direction had been such a fiasco! But now that renewed attention had been directed to the porcelain principality, tourists were going to be wanting to see the charming country and naturally everything was going to have to be made easy for them.

Glinda herself was the first to ascend, in stately dignity, the gilded-banistered stair and after her followed, in order of rank, the Princess of the Dainty China Country herself, then the Barr-Tau, Lady Stella, with close behind her her consort-to-be Roderick Litenin, Gentleman. The former dictator of Oz, Oscar Zoroaster Diggs, climbed the ladder, and only then did Prince Edward of Wates, having seen that the stairs would bear the weight of full-grown humans and being himself the fullest-grown of all, attempt the ascent, with a life-sized china pug and a woozy under his two arms. After them scampered a pair of agile cats, while a troop of little pottery people clambered laboriously up the high risers. (In fact, Rod Litenin would return in a moment and expedite their efforts.) Overhead, scorning the use of a stairway, flew a swan, a ladybird, and two butterflies.

On the little platform at the top of the wall Glinda paused and surveyed the scene within. A crowd of china people, gathered at the foot of the interior stairway (exciting intrusion into their humdrum world), raised a cheer and the Sorceress smiled and waved graciously. But her reception was mild compared to the enthusiasm that was shown when the chinas' own Princess appeared to them on top of the wall. When a little later the Chief-tain also took a bow there was further jubilation.

"I see," said the sorceress, looking round. As it happened,

Glinda had never paid a state (or even incognita) visit to this of her dominions before and hadn't properly visualized just how lamebrainedly the area had been planned. "That porcelain floor," she mused, viewing the white fundament. "All very well, no doubt, if the china figurines were going to stand still all their lives. But their 'lives' is just the point: they're living and naturally will move about. When they do they may fall and when they fall they will break—"

"Your Magicity," called Toby the (also) china pug and teeth-tugged at the hem of Glinda's gown. She looked down. "Our friend Mr. Litenin has a cure for that! Tell her, Rod."

The gaunt wanderer stepped forward on the little platform. There was a bit of a breeze and his odor wasn't *too* oppressive. He explained. "I have enough rubber sheeting to cover the entire area. That should help significantly to prevent breakage from most simple fallings down."

"Splendid," the witch commended. "Please keep me informed. At the appropriate time I'll send transport."

"Well, I thought we might commence laying it tomorrow. Her Highness, the Princess, approves the plan, and her word is law—though of course the local Country Council will want to discuss it."

"That seems in order," agreed the Sorceress. "Shall we descend?"

The china churchwarden now hurried to the fore and gave the visiting dignitary his hand (just briefly; the position was a bit awkward) to lead her in progress across the country to the site of Old South Church. China citizens flocked after, raising huzzahs in brittle voices and mingling freely with the fascinating newcomers, who took great pains to tread cautiously.

There rested the White Heap of the World, just as the churchwarden and the chieftain and the chaplain and the Chinaman and the chandler and the chambermaid and the charwoman and the child and the Chihuahua had last seen it, thirteen years before. Or almost. The china mender and his assistant had not tarried in coming to see what they could do

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and their efforts were still to be seen lying about: small fragments of the church fitted together and glued quite expertly. But it was clear that they had given up in the face of the scope of the project. How were little figures four inches high, be they ever so skilful and devoted, going to raise again to restored completion a china steeple that ought to soar to a dizzying eight or nine feet? Even if they might have been able to erect china scaffolding, a thing that had never been called for before, it was by no means certain that their iron glue would hold to an erection requiring heavy-duty structural bonding.

Witch Glinda stood with chin in hand and contemplated. At last she spoke: "It's like a giant jigsaw puzzle, isn't it?"

A chorus of admiring murmurs rose around her.

"Isn't it!" cried the Wizard of Oz.

"It sure is," agreed Rod Litenin.

"What is a jigsaw puzzle?" whispered Lady Stella, who had been out of things so long.

The Prince of Wates at her other side told her.

"I'll bet we could put it together," guessed Toby the pug.

"Sure we could," agreed the Woozy, "even though I might not be much help with my square paws."

"We'd help you, Wooz," offered the pink kitten generously.

"We could even help—with the little tiny pieces," said the two pink butterflies, who had taken up positions one on each of the Woozy's ear-hole tufts.

But the glass catsaid superciliously, "Unlike a puzzle, this thing isn't going to hold together by itself. What are you going to use for stickum?"

That brought a silence, for they had all been told that the old-fashioned local glue had been tried and found wanting.

Then Lurabelle Ladybeetle spoke. She had been remembering furiously. "There is," she piped, landing on Witch Glinda's nose just to be sure she was effectively noticed *and* heard—"a land far away whose inhabitants would like nothing better than to die for the faith! even if it is not their own. Their only fulfillment comes from getting to serve as super-tough bonder and

they're languishing with frustration at not having a chance to do so!"

The lady-bird's announcement met with great interest and there was a general outcry for more information. So then Lurabelle talked again of the Gumbugs, as she remembered them, sticky and grainy and full of paste, and of the spell that had altered them so that they might not die, when their only hope of salvation lay in death and tackiness—and of the strange ultimate dream of Glue Moon. "Do you think they will ever find it?" she asked.

"Glue Moon'?" said Glinda. "What does that concept con-note?"

"The gumbug I talked to said they didn't know water, had never seen rain, that only a few grains of dry paste might fall from the sky 'once in a glue moon', but that they longed for liquid as the only vent for facilitating their function of 'adhering.' Apparently their own native fluids like glue and mucilage don't, paradoxically enough, have the right effect. What they're obviously longing for is plain natural moisture, and if they had it, why, there would be your structural bonding for rehabilitating the church..."

"Your gumbugs," put in the wide-awake Wizard, "wouldn't lack for liquid here, my dear. As we flew in from the south I noticed bogs and marshes, full of ruddy holes, in direct proximity to the wall of this country."

"And a swan chariot awaits without," supplied Glinda. "I suppose nothing would be simpler than to send it off to the west and let it be filled with gumbugs, should they be willing to return here to end their days as fixative."

"It's what they would love most, I know," gushed Lurabelle.

"Then go we," said Glinda, "to determine who they shall be that straight shall post to the Gumbugs."

“A swan chariot?” I hear my readers say. But you made sure that two such carriages departed from the Pink Palace to round up waifs and strays, or even three, if Swen Swan could be called a courtesy chariot in his own right. The latter stalwart at this very moment was sitting on a swamp pool outside the wall of china, eating his fill of swamp flora.

But chariot number two? It raided in for a landing on the front lawn of the Palace of Magic, Emerald City, Oz! The front door of the palace was flung open and Princess Ozma rushed out, even as sub-Princess Dorothy jumped from the air-car and ran across the lawn.

The two girls flung themselves into each other’s arms and wept fit to break any on-looking heart. Unfortunately the only onlookers were the Scarecrow of Oz and the Patchwork Girl and they didn’t have any hearts. They did feel embarrassed though and discreetly withdrew again indoors.

“Well, my dear,” said Ozma at last when the two had, flopped down on the lawn, exhausted by their emotion. “We really flubbed it there, didn’t we?”

“‘Flubbed’, dear Ozma?” Dorothy raised startled tear-filled eyes. “How do you mean?”

“Well, let’s say *I* flubbed it,” retreated the ruler. “I got too *just* for my own good. I’m very sorry. In the future I’m going to be a little more human, a lot less all-wise...” she paused. Dorothy said nothing. So Ozma turned the gravity of her remarks with a pleasantry. “And you must help me, dear,” she went on. “It won’t t be easy being ‘more human’! because, as you know, I’m *not* human.”

She waited for the laugh. It didn’t come. Dorothy just kept on looking startled. “‘Not human’?” she again echoed.

“No, of course not.” Ozma adopted a no-nonsense tone. “We fairies, by definition, are not human. We’re immortals: can’t die. Have no souls. And so forth. So I’m going to need help in trying to *appear* human.”

“Don’t trouble yourself, dear heart,” said the Kansas girl, becoming more alert mentally. “Being ‘human’ is no recommendation. But for our vanity the word ‘humanity’ could be used as a synonym for ‘cruelty.’ Humans are the cruelest—in fact, the only true cruel—creatures in the world.”

“Oh, Dorothy darling,” Ozma cried in distress, “you’ve let yourself grow bitter!”

“No, only wiser.” The mortal girl recounted. “Dragging along that deserted road I had time to think. I was mad at you for taking my china playthings. I thought about everything you’d done lately, and resented all of it!: How you’d put Ojo in jail and humiliated him before all his friends and destroyed the poor old magician’s magic and—”

“No more, dearest,” pleaded Ozma. “Do you think I don’t remember—and regret?”

“But it wasn’t only you,” Dorothy went on. “I came to see my own selfishness in a new light, and my smugness and priggishness and pride. Everyone has spent so many years telling me how simple and sweet and charming I am that I finally—that is, right away—began believing it myself. But what’s the good of being called charming all the time if one is never seen to be doing anything charming? ‘Matter-of-fact’ is about as strong a word of praise as can be honestly applied to anything I’ve done so far. And the very first minute you did anything to cross me I burst into a flood of tears and ran off, just like any spoiled creature. I’m—well, very much ashamed.”

“Don’t say another word, darling. The moment that anyone uses the word ‘ashamed’ of herself it’s no longer necessary! We’ve learned, both of us, and we won’t make those mistakes again.”

“But, Ozma,” pursued the chastened mortal girl, “I *am* still ashamed. When kind Glinda showed up with her swan chariot I refused to go along with her to the dainty china country. I just couldn’t face the Chinas—after what I’d done.”

“But, dear,” Ozma continue to protest, “when you came into possession of the figurines they appeared to be stiff lifeless porcelain. You couldn’t know—”

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“Oh, yes, I could! Do you think I didn’t recognize the china Princess? I’d spoken to her! And the clown. But he was all cracked and re-mended, and I remembered how impudent he had been to me, so I left him to gather dust in Glinda’s storehouse. And several of the others. I knew they had once been alive, but had lost life, though I didn’t know how they had lost it, yet I went along with the implications of your edict against magic and profited by it, selfishly. I couldn’t go among them after that.”

“So Glinda went on alone.”

“Yes, we flew back to the redwood grove just outside the wall of china and I left her there. She let me take the chariot to come on here. Oh, Ozma, it’s such a relief to be back.”

“—And to have you back!” assured the girl ruler warmly. “But, Dorothy, do you think we can leave it at that?”

“What more can I do?”

“Don’t you think people will believe you’re sulking if you never go near the Chinas again?”

The sub-princess looked dismayed. “I guess they will.”

There was a silence.

“Where’s the chariot,” said Princess Ozma. “Shall we?”

Toby, assisted by his purple pal Purpupplio, was in his element, helping fellow china creatures in need. He had appointed himself virtual head of the Church Restoration Scheme, bossing the various aspects of the operation as the human helpers sat or knelt on the porcelain ground fitting together larger shards of the china puzzle while smaller creatures dealt with chips and fragments that required their more minute scrutiny to know where they belonged.

They were all hard at it and making very good headway as evening fell. Then one or two began to wonder about spending the night, as it was clear that the great puzzle could not be completed that day. Witch Glinda had just said to her chief associate, "Wizard, do you think you might do us sleeping pavilions for the night? Over to the east, I should imagine, in that high and dry redwood grove outside the walls." Then she looked round to see tripping toward them the young Queen of Oz, and in her company an unwontedly serious-looking Princess Dorothy.

Amidst the general exclamations of delight at the arrival of the popular young ladies no one said a word of reproach to the one from Kansas. Gradually Dorothy relaxed and began to enjoy herself and then she knew she had been right to come. Presently she even essayed to take part in the work of reconstruction and was the one to turn up a china fragment which formed part of a cornice and which everyone had been looking for.

But now it was too dark to go on and the company of repairpersons made their way carefully back to the wall staircase and found a suitable place to camp. The Wizard of Oz conjured up a substantial meal and one suited to the needs of the individual diners. Only then did most realize just how famished they were or call back to mind how incredibly long ago breakfast had been on this most eventful day in ages.

At the principal table Princess Ozma naturally sat at the head.

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When the worst pangs had been assuaged she tapped her glass and said, "Today has seen the tarnishing of my highly vaunted reputation for justness. Perhaps some impersonal ideal of justice was served by some of my decisions, but nobody was made happy as a result. Unfortunately some of the suffering caused by my — let us admit it — highhandedness cannot be undone. But where it can be, let us try."

Here Ozma turned to the solemn Roderick Litenin.

"Mr. Rod, it was from motives of justness, or concern for the general good, that I sentenced you out of hand to exile. Had I not been so quick off the mark I might have thought to employ, instead of the highly touted justice, my equally celebrated 'power'. Nor do I mean only the power to promulgate and enforce a number of arbitrary laws.

"No, my power should extend to the accomplishment of deeds by the application of ability, intelligence — wisdom, if you will. Yet the moment that all my friends went off on one of my own-imposed errands I found myself to be almost powerless.

"My magic staff served only to influence things in my immediate vicinity. Without the help of my friend, the Wizard, I could bring off no wide-ranging wonders of sorcery. Without communication with the good Witch of the South I could not draw on *her* great knowledge. I wasn't even quick enough to recall, without the reminder of the wise Scarecrow, my facility with the transport of small objects. And even then our little helpmeet, Lurabelle Ladybeetle, was able to accomplish a lot more than could I.

"But I can learn, don't you see?"

"I would like to start with you, Rod. Far from going to a water-hole in the desert, you will, I hope, come to the Emerald City. There is a little house standing vacant: declined by a couple wounded in my campaign of righteousness. It shall be yours, *if* you would like it, and that, of course, of your dear companion Lady Stella. My wand will serve at least to make it weather- and earthquake-proof. Then you may come daily to the workrooms of the Wizard and myself, while we leave no stone unturned as

we try by every means to get at the source of your attraction for natural disasters. Perhaps at the same time we might succeed in building into your constitution a permanent fragrance of hyacinths—or of roasting coffee! replacing any other ‘airs’ you may be heir to.

“All this, of course, only if you should wish it...?”

As an alternative to living the rest of his days in the desert the scheme didn’t look too bad to Rod Litenin. But he turned to the woman at his side for her decision.

“Oh, I could be content anywhere,” said Stella Barr-Tau in her thrilling dark voice, “—as long as we’re together. We can’t be parted, can we?”

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

The return of the Prince of Wates in the swan chariot loaded with gumbugs was the signal for a great burst of activity in and about the dainty china country.

The prince had not reached the District of Cohesion until late in the evening and then only located it by the aid of the moon shining on the wide white paste Waste. He slept in the chariot while his pilot, Lurabelle Ladybird, flew out on a short exploratory trip and made contact with some of the native fauna. This was a night that went down in Gumbug history as a true "Glue Moon", for then something descended from the sky that was to change all their lives utterly.

When Lurabelle told them what was wanted and what a chance it was for any insect who had gum and would travel, there was enormous enthusiasm. The creatures could hardly wait for daylight to begin boarding the chariot but the ladybeetle warned them that the weary prince would scarcely welcome bugs in his bed (such as it was). Instead, they took time to pack their tiny suitcases more carefully.

By an hour after sun-up the air-car was overflowing with fixative life. Indeed, it is to be feared that many hundreds of the tiny insects were blown off by the wind of their passage as the chariot sped the long distance from western Winkieland to south-central Qualdinga. One wonders what may have been the fate of individual Gumbugs who discovered themselves descending, alone, into unfamiliar but presumably well-watered territory. Perhaps some found their way to others of their fellows and there started sticky little settlements. Or perhaps they merely ended up as a long trail of glue across Oz.

The look-out on the platform at the top of the wall stairway (it was M. A. Joker, clown) sang out the word when the swan chariot was sighted. It had been arranged that a large area at the center of the china floor should be cleared utterly and the chariot and pair made a perfect six-point landing. Then from the periphery of the landing stage the excited on-lookers of both pot-

tery and flesh (and even one of glass) surged forward.

Prince Edward took a bow and looked pleased with his exploit. (His reward was to be allowed the use of one of the chariots for his transportation to his island home later that afternoon.) Then china workmen began to fill china wheelbarrows with gumbugs. They trundled them to the side of the orderly arrangement of church-shards all key-numbered for instant fitting to matching bits. There the Wizard had caused china tubs of water from the outlying marshes to be set up.

The work went on all day and everyone took part. Gumbugs would crawl along a rim of broken china, someone would sprinkle them with water from a tub, then a further-fitting piece of the church would be gently lowered upon them, and with sighs of satisfaction the gumbugs would fulfil their destiny. By four o'clock that afternoon the assembled throng were ready with china wedges and levers to raise the lying-down (for greater ease of assembly) church into upright position. Then it was just a question of tall Rod Litenin and taller Edward of Wates climbing on stepladders to put the last pieces in place on top of the tower.

What a cheer went up when the Prince placed, like the cherry on the sundae or the star on the top of the Christmas tree, the little china pennon upon the tip of the steeple!

Then queen Ozma shook hands with Wizard Diggs who gave his hand to the Good Sorceress of the South who saluted the Lady Stella of Barr-Tau who embraced Rod Litenin who spoke kindly to Princess Dorothy who clapped on the head the amiable Woozy of Oz who licked with his leathery tongue the china cheek of Toby, the life-sized pug, who playfully bit the tail of the pink kitten Eureka who turned to the Glass Cat who spoke to Swen of the Swans who inclined his head in homage to the now radiant Princess of the China Country who gave a little speech to the china chieftain and all their people, including the china Chihuahua who, aping his friend Toby, bit the leg of the china clown who hopped about and sent fluttering from off the Woozy's head the two pink butterflies who retreated to the side

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of their friend Lurabelle Ladybug who was sitting on a little white object, looking on and enjoying the fun.

"What's that you're sitting on, Lurabelle?" said Bettina Butterfly.

"Why, this?" said the ladybeetle, looking down. "I hardly know. A white stone, I think. I noticed afterwards that the Woozy had been sitting on it, covering it up, while the rest of the people worked."

"It's a piece of china, that's what it is," announced Bettina in no faltering terms.

"It's a piece of the *church*, that's what it is!" cried Lurabelle, scrambling off it in haste. "It got left out. How awful."

"Still," said Felicia Featherwing, looking up in awe at the towering church spire, "I suppose the church hardly needs it."

"Hm," said Bettina, fluttering near and looking over the fragment. "It looks like a toe, doesn't it?"

"A *toe!*" cried all the animals, who had been looking on in amusement. These were two cats and a woozy, two dogs and a swan.

"Yes. A toe," affirmed Bettina. "A sort of a toe. It's got a shape like a nail at the end of it, you see. Or more like a claw, really..."

Everybody fell silent and looked at Toby, the life-sized pug.

Then, as if it had all been ordained, oh, ages before, the dog limped to the little chip of china and placed his paw against it. A couple of left-over gumbugs saw their chance for immortality and leapt to insinuate themselves between china foot and china chip. Eureka the kitten gave a loving lick to the whole thing.

Tentatively Toby raised his paw and looked at it. Then he took a step. Two more. He ran. He raced around in a wide circle. And then he said, "Perfect! It works perfectly."

Everybody looking on cheered.

But then the pug sat down on his haunches. "It *works* perfectly. I can run without halting, for the first time ever. But it doesn't *feel* quite right. In fact it doesn't feel anything. The toe feels well, dead."

"Of course it's dead," said the glass cat Bungle nonchalantly.

“Gluing things to one’s body doesn’t automatically bring them to life You’re going to have to have special treatment if you want the toe to be living—and *part* of you.”

Toby looked distressed but the pink kitten demanded: “What kind of treatment?”

“A magic spell, I dare say,” opined the glass cat and licked her glass shoulder. “Now I know of one. I’ve seen it used. It brings objects of glass and stone and wood and cloth to life without fail. For it you’re going to need various ingredients: the wing of a yellow butterfly—”

“Oh-oh,” broke in the China Dog of Oz. “Here we go again.”

