

The Cloud King OF Oz

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Founded on and Continuing
The Famous Oz Stories
by L. Frank Baum

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The Cloud King of Oz

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"Glinda," said Dorothy, not bothering with honorifics.

"Yes, dear?"

"What are you getting Ozma?"

"Getting'?"

"You know: like for her birthday."

The Queen of the Quadlings considered. "Not getting, exactly. More 'abetting'."

Since her degree Dorothy was of course fully conversant with that word, so she didn't ask What? but "Whom?"

"Oh, that would be telling, wouldn't it?" said Glinda. But she told. "However, it *is* a secret. You won't tell anyone, will you?"

"I'd sooner sicken and die," quoted the young American princess.

"Oh, but, Glinda!" she went on abruptly. "I've had a terrific idea!"

"May I know?" asked the Sorceress-in-Extraordinary to the Court of Oz.

"I want to hold the party for Ozma! I couldn't think what I could give her that would be the least bit different. She's the 'Princess that has everything'—and what she hasn't got she can get with the Magic Belt in the wink of an eye. But *this* would be different!"

"I'm all agog," confessed the witch of the South.

Then Princess Dorothy reminisced. "I only ever went to one. It was—oh, ages ago: when I went to the Butterfield District School back in 1899. I didn't seem to have any real girl friends there but just one time I did get invited to a party: an all-night party.

"One of the girls lived on a farm where there was a walnut grove and we were all supposed to bring a blanket and a pillow and then we'd sleep out under the walnut trees, have supper there and tell stories. It was just about this time of year too—maybe a little later. It was such fun—even a bit romantic: with

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the laughing girls, playing along the road—when the sun was low and the air was cool—stopping to club the walnut trees standing leafless against the flaming west...”

Dorothy’s eyes grew a little misty remembering a lost golden day. “Anyway, it was called a ‘slumber party.’ I’d like to give one for Ozma. I bet she’s never been to one. It would be—different.”

The sorceress smiled. “It’s a charming idea, Dorothy. There’s just one catch. Ozma would have to know in advance, so the element of surprise would be lost.”

“Oh, would she have to know? Yes, I suppose she would. At least, we could hardly plan the logistics of it without her noticing and catching on. In that case it would make it a lot easier just to include her from the start. Oh, well...”

Thus it was that before long Princess Ozma, as she had on so many previous occasions, found herself being talked to by her great chum and favorite Princess Dorothy about Kansas. How Dorothy had enjoyed that one time sleeping outdoors beneath the starlit sky!

Ozma, without at all wanting to practise one-upwomanship, revealed that she had in fact done this a number of times. That was during her early boyhood when the witch Mombi, dissatisfied with the boy Tippetarius’ failure to clean thoroughly the cottage in which they lived, had thrown him out to make the best of snuggling down in the nettle bed conveniently located near the back door.

But Dorothy’s tale of a slumber party underneath the stars was something else again. Ozma was intrigued and readily went along with the plan. “How many did you think of inviting, dear?” she asked.

“Oh, everybody who’d be wanting to celebrate your birthday,” assured the Kansas girl.

Ozma giggled modestly. “I’m afraid that will be everybody—period.”

“Then everybody must come,” declared Dorothy.

“You mean the entire population of the Emerald City?! plus

all the invitees from outside the District of Oz?" cried the little fairy. "Goodness, it will be like a mass exodus or migration of peoples."

"Exactly," concurred the Kansas girl. "That's why I thought it would be best if we held it on those big meadows out south-east of the city: bordering on that forest, you know, that belongs to the Lion King's domains."

So the queen sent for her herald and instructed him to have the Emerald Citizens gather in the square before the royal palace. Thither she made her way in due course and stepped out upon the balcony that overlooked the scene.

The men threw their hats in the air, the women applauded, and the children cheered. When their queen began to speak and told them what the gathering was all about, they all screamed even louder, especially one little girl whose pigtail had been pulled by a naughty boy, making the sounds of acclamation not exclusively those of pleasure.

There was another round of applause when Ozma's brief proclamation was done. The Courageous Lion was one of those most delighted for he had just learned that he was to play inadvertent partial host to the celebration. He tried to execute a little dance of satisfaction, but failed. Despite Narnia it is always difficult for lions to stand on their hind legs—while waltzing on all fours somehow just doesn't look like a dance.

Every man, woman, child, and animal in the city went home to make preparations for the great event which was scheduled for the evening of the following day. Those who were made of flesh and blood packed food in large hampers and folded linens to sleep on; those who weren't merely prepared themselves in mind to sit or stand all night in a different locale than usual. The Wizard of Oz put up some powders which would be necessary for converting pocket handkerchiefs into tents, just in the unlikely event that it might rain.

When all was ready people and animals took their places in the long procession that was to follow their queen to the forest-edged meadows. To the southeastern city gate they marched

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and there Ozma gave the signal for the Guardian of the Gate to grant them egress. Out of the emerald metropolis they trooped. Two men in front carried banners. Four others blew on trumpets made of silver.

Actually no one had expected the dainty girl Queen to tramp the entire distance. No, she was borne proudly on the back of her friend and steed, the renowned Sawhorse.

As the trumpeters' clarion calls rang out the mob moved forward with glad smiles on their faces.

Despite the Wizard's expectation that the prospects for precipitation were poor some clouds did after all dot the sky and cast their shadows on the green land below.

One of these clouds, unlike the usual run of such vapor collections which drift or scud along without looking at where they're going, seemed to be following the parade of people, almost as if with intent. Several of the marchers looked up at it from time to time wonderingly and even pointed it out to their fellows. The cloud went on slowly trailing the procession for more than the hour it took for the vanguard to reach the beginnings of the meadows designated for the night's festivities. Then it did something very odd.

When the first of the arrivals had already begun to spread out picnic cloths and blankets the attendant cloud turned around and sped back to the Emerald City, arriving over the capital just as the Guardian was locking up for the night. His devotion to this duty was so great that he had even declined to join the general slumber-bound exodus. Faramont placed the key in his uniform pocket and departed for his cottage home outside the city walls.

The cloud waited until it saw that the last Emerald Citizen had quitted the city (though how a cloud could 'see' is not recorded; perhaps with the eye of the storm). Then it sailed serenely over the walls to a position over the center of the town, where it began to condense.

A sprinkle of sparkling spangles fell to the green streets of the Emerald City. There the drops slowly flowed toward the central gutter and from there trickled down to collect in a low place at the intersection of Strawberry Street and Lullaby Lane, where, *mirabile dictu*, the puddle began to take on a different, definite, and no longer flat-lying shape.

The shape was that of a large man of powerful appearance though a rather wishywashy expression. Perhaps this latter was produced by his insignificance of a nose, though all his other

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features were striking: large steely eyes like those of a cat, a wide beard and moustache and two very bushy eyebrows. The mouth was heart-shaped and the face was framed by hair that appeared to consist of long strands of porcelain: perhaps adapted plumbing fixtures. From his muscular back rose silver wings and there was another pair of these on his heels. Despite his sappy expression he was a rather impressive-looking fellow.

For lo: this was the Great Cloud King of Oz. He had descended from his kingdom in the sky to pay a visit to the surface of his wonderful magical homeland.

The Cloud King had existed from time immemorial and so, though rarely in contact with any of the inhabitants of the magic land, he knew from centuries of drifting or racing across it a good deal about the country. He even knew of the great Sorceress Glinda and of her wonderful Book of Records and of the fact that it was promptly going to record anything he did here now.

The Cloud King had said to himself (once when in vocal mode and not merely thundering): "I don't care if they find out about the deeds I'm going to perform with my own brands of magic. Maybe that will even make them sit up and take notice of the importance and power of my people" (though whom he meant by 'people' is not recorded) "and of our world."

The king was immensely old, for he began life when the first clouds were formed. He was immensely wise and skilled too. He could control the clouds, make them rain or hail or snow just as he directed. He held himself directly responsible for all the weather in and around Oz. He had always taken great pride in the beautiful valley landscapes he had created through slow ages by the gradual wearing down of mountains, as well as in the beauty of flowers and trees that he made flourish with mundane rain.

As for his magic, that was so simply done that it hardly was interesting. He just had to wave a hand (or, when in cloud mode, shake a mare's-tail) to make any wish come true. And it was on this very day that he had chosen to take on his greatest magical task.

He planned to take away with him to his kingdom in the sky the most magnificent city (well, the only one, really) in all Oz.

The Cloud King got to work without fuss or feathers. For an hour or so he stayed near his puddle place in Lullaby Lane and cast a large number of magic spells. Afterwards he flew about the city as quickly as his silver wings would bear him and sprayed a fine blue vapor over all the buildings. It was important that every structure in town receive at least a drop of the mysterious effluvium. Then when he had done so the Emerald City became as light as air. King Welkin stood to one side and watched the whole thing drift up into the sky where it presently disappeared under the vault of heaven. The king was not long in following it, returning to his own city among the clouds. His magic, by no means to his surprise, had proven effective down to the last detail.

All this had happened during the last hours of evening while the Emerald Citizens were preoccupied with the enjoyment of their basket supper and afterwards taking part in sing-songs and extemporaneous performances on piccolo and zither. No one thought of looking to the northwestern horizon beyond the screen of low hills and woods, where in any case no lights burned in the deserted city.

The greater then was the shock when the Emerald Citizens rose early from what all had to admit had been a rather chilly night. Among the first was young Dorothy who, for reasons best known to herself (perhaps the better to view the rising sun), climbed a tall sycamore where she spied out, after the merest glance to the east, into the northwesterly distance.

Beyond the hills and trees were—more hills and trees, with one rather bare broad patch where nothing much seemed to be growing, as far as she could tell from her airy perch. Looking down and around to be sure she was observed Dorothy pinched herself.

“Ouch,” she replied, then: “I guess this isn’t just a bad dream. I wonder where our beautiful city could have got to.”

Queen Ozma still lay asleep in the rosy bower the Wizard

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had rigged up for her out of a few flower petals under a tall maple. Dorothy touched her shoulder. Her friend sat up and stretched. "What game are we playing today?" she asked with a happy yawn.

"It's called One of Our Cities Is Missing," adlibbed the Kansan. She took her queen's hand. "Ozma darling," she went on. "I'm afraid I have what may be bad news. Something has happened to our Emerald City." Little pools of tears actually welled in her eyes.

"Something nice, I hope," returned Ozma in matching jocular tone. Then she observed her chum's tears. "I see: this is no game. Please don't cry, my dear. I'll need you to help as we go round waking the others."

The first to receive the alarm was O.Z. Diggs, the Wizard. He lost valuable time determining by the use of magic spells that the city was actually gone. Dorothy had found that out from the branches of the sycamore. However, he also ascertained that the Emerald City had not merely been made invisible.

The Courageous Lion and the Hungry Tiger had spent the night peacefully purring on a large emerald green pillow, their favorite form of couch whether at home or abroad. While Ozma woke them Dorothy moved to where Trot and Betsy Bobbin were sharing a blanket. Cap'n Bill, always protective of Trot, was not far away. The three had fallen asleep while playing at dozminoes.

Under a jacaranda tree lay the Shaggy Man and Button Bright. They were being shaken awake by Princess Ozma's personal attendant Jellia Jamb who was having hysterics ever since she heard the Wizard's final analysis. Without waiting to see if her friends were fully awake Jellia ran off crying, "What am I going to do?! My work's run away... Where's my broom? Where's my feather duster?!" Dorothy made a moue of dismay; Jellia was usually cool in a crisis.

As the various denizens of the royal palace came to, learned of the disaster, and gathered around their sovereign, their cries of consternation roused the farther-flung Emerald Citizens who flocked about demanding what was what and

what to do about it.

Ozma commanded silence and a brief space of time to collect her wits. Everyone fell silent as commanded and nobody moved. Only Jellia returned in chastened mood and crept to a rock convenient for sitting and dusted it off for Ozma with her night cap.

The Scarecrow and the Patchwork Girl, for fear of dangerous dews, had spent the night in a little tent apart, talking to each other. They now appeared, belated and bewildered to hear of the dreadful news. They were so dismayed that their vaunted intelligence failed them and they just sat down and stared straight before them for hours.

Queen Ozma's cogitations had borne fruit. "The first thing we must do is round up all the roadworthy animals. For a little time they must, alas, serve as beasts of burden. We must get the population under cover before another nightfall. The slumber party has been ever such fun but an indefinite period out of doors cannot be thought of.

"I wondered, you know," mused the little queen, "why Glinda was not with us here at the birthday doings. She was in town only yesterday. Could she have foreseen something of this contretemps? In any case, we have sore need of her help now. Of course the Ruby City cannot house all of us as well as its own inhabitants. Half must travel with us to her. Shaggy, I would ask of you that you lead the rest of our friends to the castle of the Emperor of the Winkies. Incidentally there will be plenty of work for them there as this is the harvest season."

The Emerald Citizens surging about were growing angry as the full realization came to them that they had lost their homes and all their belongings. Ozma spoke to quieten them. "Please calm yourselves. I shall do all in my power to insure that you regain your dwellings and all of our beautiful city. For now we must divide up, some journeying southward into Quadlingland, the rest to the land of the Winkies. Please gather your belongings and be ready to march out as you shall be commanded. Families will not be separated."

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The queen's tone had been grave but others of the party were not taking the catastrophe so heavily. What most amused many people was the sight of the others in their night-clothes, for of course few had taken time to get dressed before running to hear the consternating news. Now Betsy, Trot, and Cap'n Bill were heard to burst out laughing. They had just caught sight of the Soldier with the Green Whiskers peering out from behind a great rock. The long skinny man was ashamed to be seen in his long skinny nightshirt.

"Oh, isn't he the cutest!" cried Betsy with a rather out-of-place merry gleam in her eyes.

"I do declare," howled the cap'n, quite falling to the ground and rolling about with amusement, "I don't know when I've ever seen anything funnier than green handle-bar moustaches tied up with pink ribbons."

The merriment showed no signs of abating, with the captain holding his sides and the soldier wincing and gritting his teeth with anger and embarrassment, until Dorothy came up and said, "Cap'n dear, you're hurting Omby Amby's feelings. Would you mind putting a sock in it?"

Ever impressed by commands from royalty, Cap'n Bill at once sat on a rock and pulled the sock off his one good foot. He stuffed it in his mouth but alas, it didn't prevent his har-har, ho-ho's from still being audible.

Princess Ozma at last put a stop to the unseemly hilarity by declaring, "We must not waste any more time. I would like for us to be able to reach Glinda's before dark. We must find out what she knows about the disappearance of our royal city." Various thoughtful individuals agreed, including the Wizard, the Courageous Lion, and Hank the mule.

Then it was bustle, bustle! "Caparison my horse!" cried Ozma, and they all flew into a tizzy as they sought to sort themselves out and decide who was going to ride on who. When the dust cleared Button Bright, Betsy Bobbin, and Trot were found seated on the back of the Hungry Tiger. This celebrity yawned and said, "Maybe we'll find some tender juicy fat babies on our

way there. One or two such would preserve me from starving.”

“Would these do?” asked Betsy and passed him a handful of jelly babies from her capacious apron pocket.

Princess Ozma took her place on her caparisoned horse (wooden, type Saw-, Mark IX), then found that there would be room behind her for the Patchwork Girl and the Scarecrow, who were still in their post-shock trance, the one staring cottonly, the other strawishly. The Sawhorse, usually so pleased to carry his sovereign and life-giver wherever she listed, now pawed the ground nervously, as loath to bear her to the slaughter-house.

Cap’n Bill and Jellia Jamb, an oddly matched pair, took seats on the back of the mule Hank, and the procession was just about to set off when there was a commotion from behind. This proved to emanate from two cats and a dog: the Glass Cat, Eureka the Pink Kitten, and Dorothy’s Toto. It appeared that they were quarreling over a dirty old bone belonging to the latter, but as the story is scarcely edifying we will omit it here.

The caravan proceeded apace, Ozma in the lead, the cluster of palace celebrities close behind her, and a vast concourse of the humbler Emerald Citizenry trailing after at the best speed they could muster though all afoot. To tell truth, the common people were rather soon left behind and we hear no more of them until such happy day as their capital might be restored and they could go home again.

The main contingent of refugees pressed ever southward. They had no trouble in keeping track of where they were going as they had but to keep the sun in front of them and look out for the red landscapes of the Quadling country. There most everything is of a roseate hue. Flowers, trees, and animals of all species wear the most brilliant shades of crimson, scarlet, carmine, cerise, ruby, lake, terra cotta, claret, russet, and brick. There are also some pink things. The company of seventeen (give or take a few) rode as quickly as they could straight toward the palace of Glinda the Good.

Cloud King Welkin knew that what he had done was wrong. One just doesn't steal capital cities, then mingle with decent people. In for a penny, in for a pound, he thought. Depriving the Emerald Citizens of houses and homes wasn't enough. "I'll fix them," he declared to himself spitefully. "I'll make their journey as miserable for them as I can."

He waved his right little finger in the air three times, then lifting his left hand on high he rotated the little finger there in the opposite direction. This done, he chanted:

"Rain, rain, come in a sluice,
So Ozma's party go to the deuce!"

At that very moment, far away, the sky grew dark above the travelers. Clouds clashed together bringing forth the rain within them; lightning filled the sky with brilliant pyrotechnics, followed by loud crashes of thunder. Dorothy was reminded of a Fourth of July celebration home in Kansas in wet weather. The road the company trod became a slippery, sloppery, slimy mess. Walking even a few paces upon what had been a dry and dusty trail became a difficult task.

"We must find a dry place for the Scarecrow and Scraps," quoth Ozma, "or they will become of no use to anyone, even themselves." Even as she spoke, the Patchwork Girl grew limp and listless. She fluttered her cotton-gloved hands once, then fell off the Sawhorse and flopped to the ground. She was helpless to get to her feet again.

The Scarecrow was made of (slightly) sterner stuff. An Emerald City upholsterer had mingled stiff steel wire spirals with his straw filling at his latest overhaul. "Scarecrow to the rescue," he cried and leapt to Scraps' side. He extended his stuffed hand to help her rise. "Oh, dear, I believe you've gained weight," he said to the sponge-like maiden.

Scraps was not so far gone but what she could still poetize:

"Your words are all too true.

This rain has made me blue.
If only Munchkins knew:
They'd make me theirs too."

But this only revealed to the others that her mind was indeed wandering, for the Patchwork Girl had been a Munchkin from the word Go.

Even as he struggled to lift his pied pal the Scarecrow himself became stuck in the mud. His desperate cries moved his traveling companions strangely. They had all had presence of mind to dash under roadside trees, from where they watched the fun.

At last Dorothy cried excitedly: "Oh, won't someone please help them! King Rex, your four strong feet won't get stuck. I beg you, bring them over here under the trees." Then, warm and dry as toast, she continued to observe the drama.

Thus inspired the Courageous Lion headed out into the elements where he soon seized first the cotton girl, then the straw man, in his dandelion-colored teeth—but gently!—and bore them to safety and relative dryness.

Too late the Wizard tore a hem from his shirt and said a few magic words, among which could be distinguished:

"Iscarabella!

Become an umbrella!"

A wave of his right hand in the steaming air produced a cloud of green smoke, whereupon the standers-by could watch the tatter of cloth swell into a beautiful big bumbershoot of tartan pattern.

"Quick, everyone!" he cried. "Get under this umbrella!"

"Why?" said Button Bright. "I'm perfectly dry standing under this spreading chestnut tree, which is a lot bigger than that parasol."

But O.Z. Diggs was determined to prove a hero, now that there was no need for it. He seized the blanket off Hank the mule's back and threw it over Betsy, Trot, Button Bright, Dorothy, and the little Queen, who all began to sneeze mightily from stable dust and mule juice.

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The Cloud King with infinitely remote vision was watching all this with great amusement. "Now I'll make it snow," he announced to his audience of one. He did this suddenly, never stopping to reflect that by freezing water surfaces he made them firm enough to walk on. However, no one was going to be doing that just yet for the damp and sneezy mule cover froze iron-hard in the abrupt cold snap and Ozma and the others were trapped underneath. There they made much moan.

"Oh-h, Oz-z-ma, I'm s-so c-c-cold," gasped Dorothy through chattering teeth.

"Wizard, oh, Wizard, can you hear us?" called the dainty Queen of Oz. "If you could do anything I'm sure all of us underneath here would appreciate it."

"Right you are," said O.Z. Diggs breezily. He tore off another piece of his plaid hunting shirt, rolled it into a ball, and cast a spell. In no time it had stretched into an enormous length of material of irregular shape. The Wizard whipped out his whizzer-scissors, snipped out great hunks of the cloth, and shoved them one after another under the crusty edge of the mule blanket. There the girls with faltering fingers drew out their pocket sewing kits (which they never left home without) and in a short space of time had stitched together for themselves capacious comfy mother-hubbards which, when donned, soon brought agreeable warmth to frigid bodies. This together with the activity of sewing raised the general temperature enough that the mule blanket thawed and they were able to creep out from under.

"Let's make a fire," proposed Dorothy and went to collect branches and twigs fallen from the nearest tree. Soon a cheery blaze gladdened the eyes and outer surfaces of the frozen travelers. 'Frozen' was quite literal in the case of the stuffed members of the party. The Patchwork Girl was as stiff as if made of wood and the Scarecrow, speaking for the first time in hours, said in a muffled tone, "I could use some thawing out." The pair were both attracted and repelled by the blaze, wanting to lose their unaccustomed stiffness and dampness but fearing fire.

"It's getting late for any further travel today," spoke Ozma in a sad tone. "Do you have enough magic left, Mr. Diggs, to make us a tent for overnighting?"

"There *isn't* much," confessed the Wizard. "Besides, my magic may be a little damp. But we'll see."

He took off the rest of his shirt, made a few passes, and lo! there appeared on a patch of bare ground the tattiest tatteredest Bedouin tent anyone had ever seen, all frayed and threadbare, in a most incongruous tartan pattern. The Wizard blushed.

"At least it's big enough to contain all of us," said the dainty ruler kindly. Even she by now had forgotten about the left-behind Emerald Citizens who were nominally supposed to be of the party.

"It looks like it's been through more than one desert storm," commented Dorothy acidly. "Oh, well, come on, chums," she commanded and led the way to enter and explore their lodging.

More disappointments awaited them there. There were no beds or cots. On the still-frozen ground lay Persian carpets - apparently made by just-beginning apprentices - and on the one low but broad table was spread a jumbled array of second-quality dates and a large haunch of dried camel. The girl travelers from blue turned a little green.

"I told you I had only a little magic left," the Wizard excused himself, "and what there was wasn't top-quality."

The party passed a miserable night, all lying crowded close together in a heap for mere animal warmth. The only ones who enjoyed themselves were Scraps and the Scarecrow, who spent the night outside dancing furiously in the moonlight, just to try to dry themselves out and limber themselves up.

On awaking too early next morning the Hungry Tiger called for a hundred tender juicy fat babies and was shushed fiercely.

Princess Ozma was more provident. "Collect those dates, someone, won't you?" she requested. "And let us fold up the tent carefully, just in case. There may not be any more where this one, such as it is, came from." Hardly speaking her loyal subjects obeyed.

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Things were a bit better after they got under way. Though it was still bitterly cold the sun was shining brightly. The steeds remounted, the party soon passed into territory that was distinctly Quadlingual. The color red dominated everything. They saw redwood trees towering high, raspberry brambles, and, crimson against the lingering snow, the brightest roses any of them had seen. On every hand grew tulip 'bushes', peculiar to Oz alone and additionally distinguished by blooming in late August. From time to time the caravan passed mileposts, peppermint-striped in red and white.

Native fauna made its appearance as well. The travelers glimpsed tawny foxes, ruby-red fieldmice, and little pink bunnies which caused Jellia Jamb to exclaim, "Oh, aren't they *cute!*" The loud though affectionate word startled the rabbits, however, so they scurried out of view.

"This is my favorite time of year to visit our good Sorceress Glinda," said Wizard Diggs.

"Yes, it reminds me of a favorite song of mine," agreed Betsy and began to hum: "Icy finger-waves... Ski trails on a mountainside... Snow-light in Vermont..."

Happily, well before dark they caught sight of the tallest spires of the Ruby Palace of the good witch of the South. The animals quickened their pace. The little queen had trouble controlling the eager Sawhorse. He was all for making a mad dash toward the city of rubies.

Soon they could make out the red banners that flew from the distant turrets. When nearer they could see that each flag bore the device of a letter G within a letter Q. Even the slowest-thinking understood what these letters stood for. Next they could see that the palace walls were encrusted with rubies and, nearer yet, the party noted that the palace gates were artfully covered with an iron-hard paste of crushed rubies. The very path they trod consisted of a gravel of second-quality precious stones.

Now this path was replaced by carpeting of red velvet and Witch Glinda's maids of honor greeted Princess Ozma and welcomed the throng of visitors. "Our lady waits to receive you

in her parlor," announced Tourmaline, the principal maid.

Glinda was seated upon what needs must be described as a throne, though protocol would have had that she descend and greet her sovereign standing, if not kneeling. She wore a gown of fire-red moon-beam silk. It descended to her ankles, beneath which could just be glimpsed ruby slippers. At breast (not too low-cut) and cuffs and hem were fringes of silver lace. Glinda's auburn hair was caught up in a chignon and she wore a comb and short mantilla of fire-engine red. Altogether she made a stunning impression, standing just where rays of the sun struck through redstained windows.

Perhaps the magnificence was lost on the young queen of Oz. Perhaps she was just the least bit wounded because Glinda had left the Emerald City so unaccountably just as Ozma's birthday slumber party was about to begin. At any rate she began rather shortly, saying, "My party is hungry and tired as we have traveled a long and unpleasant way to visit you, Glinda. You and I must consult directly."

A light flush rose into the good sorceress' cheeks but she made no sign, only turning to address Tourmaline: "You have prepared rooms. Please conduct our guests thither. And if you will, let cook know that dinner will be in three quarters of an hour."

The usual splendor prevailed at the dining table. The board was covered with a raspberry taffeta cloth. All the glassware was cranberry, all the porcelain carnelian, all the nappery damask. Long-stemmed roses rose from rosy red-gold vases. The diners sat on red plush cushions. Round the walls of the refectory were ranged paintings in rosewood frames of many of the Sorceress' favorite persons and creatures. All those seated at the table could, with a bit of looking, identify themselves in limned likeness.

The queen, however, was still upset that her hostess was taking so lightly her predicament. Their preprandial conference had produced nothing but Glinda's casual though kindly shushing. "We shall have ample time for discussion later. For now, dear Ozma, will you not allow yourself to enjoy the being together of all of us? After all, supper tonight is *my* birthday celebration for you."

Procrastination continued after the sumptuous meal. All the party gravitated to the palace ballroom where the all-girl orchestra struck up a toe-tapping tune. This of course was the signal for the Scarecrow and his girl friend to give way once more to the terpsichorean craze that had so unwontedly struck them. That moon-night on the ice must have worked its spell. The two couldn't stop tripping the light fantastic.

To them perhaps it was romance and blitheful charm. To the onlookers it was comedy. Where Scraps and Scarekickers possibly anticipated sighs of admiration and applause they were greeted by gales of laughter. The other dancers presently left the floor and formed a great circle to watch the comic duo hop 'til they dropped. This, however, was impossible and one by one everyone went off to longed-for bed, while the straw-and-cotton pair waltzed on.

The rising sun pierced further red-stained glass and shone on Ozma's face, where the ruby hue made a pleasing contrast with the emerald-green eyes which soon opened. She sat up in

bed and rubbed her eyes. Then she dropped back again and said to herself, "Oh, what the heck. This is too nice—after two nights of roughing it," and she slept again for another half hour.

After that it was no nonsense. "Come in," called a sleepy voice when there was a sharp rap on Witch Glinda's bedroom door. She expected to see the enquiring face of Tourmaline and was just a bit taken aback to see that of Queen Ozma of Oz, who was dressed in riding togs, the nearest thing to a travel outfit she had been able to find in the closets of the chamber assigned to her.

Spruce though she looked, Ozma was in no robust mood. Her throat was dry and parched as she tried to utter, nor could she hold back tears any longer.

"What ever is the matter, my dear?" cried Glinda.

"I've lost my palace and my beautiful Emerald City, that's what!" croaked Ozma. "I've been trying to impress that fact on you since yesterday but you don't seem to care. It's awfully unlike you, Glinda."

The sorceress looked concerned and the young queen went on: "How am I going to manage? What will become of my people? Half of them have become day laborers in the Winkie country and the other half—if they're lucky—are going to be landing on your doorstep today or tomorrow. I should think you'd want to get cracking lining up lodgings for them— if only in stables and mangers," she added, remembering the witch's don't-care attitude.

"Let us go look in the Great Book of Records," suggested Glinda, thinking that would take Ozma's mind off. "Perhaps that will give clues to the great disappearance."

"I was hoping you would allow that," cried the princess with almost a smile of gladness.

"Only, after breakfast," said Glinda, ever offputting.

Ozma swallowed the delay with as much grace as she could muster. It proved to be her only meal of the morning.

The breakfast of the other visitors proved not to be of much greater extent. An annoying diversion took place in the form of

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the attempts of an under-maid, Garnet, to brush and comb the Hungry Tiger's pelt. People forgot to eat while they watched the two chase each other, in highly unseemly fashion, round the breakfast tables. "Oh, goodness, it reminds me of an Oz book," sighed Ozma at this further delay: "all this senseless horse-play holding up the business at hand." However, she put on a fixed smile and tried to seem condescending and indulgent. When the breakfasters looked again the servants had carried all the leftovers back to the kitchen.

At last Ozma, Glinda, and the Wizard were closeted over the vast Book of Records. Dorothy wanted to be too but the girl ruler told her to go and play. After all, Trot and Betsy were not always demanding to participate in the highest councils, and in her present sombre mood Ozma did not choose to be suspected of favoritism.

Glinda's Book of Records had for eons past been a useful tool to the all-wise sorceress. It told of all important events taking place in the world or out of it. Every time a cabinet minister in Slovenia initialed a decree it was recorded there. You can imagine how exciting great areas of the Book were. Glinda, by great and intense working of magic, had long ago managed to effect an amelioration in the volume's printed entries: all events happening in Oz were thenceforth recorded in dark gold print, rather than in the customary black. That made skimming easier.

Glinda skimmed—and it was not long before she exclaimed, "I have found something."

"Oh, tell, tell!" cried the excited sovereign of Oz.

"A certain Cloud King has taken your city and palace—"

"'Cloud King'? Do you mean King Welkin?" broke in Ozma. "Why, I know him. At least, I've heard a lot about him. Why in the world—"

"I've never even heard of him," volunteered O.Z. Diggs. He looked solemn. "A serious gap in my knowledge, it would appear. Where does he come from?"

Glinda leaned back in her studio chair and touched her witch's thorn to her lips. "I have known the Cloud King for many

years as a kind and gentle being. He has been in—well, *over*—Oz for as long as there have been clouds in the sky. His magic is most powerful. He has watched for long ages the doings of good witches and bad ones alike. With his brilliant intelligence he picked up most of his magic that way. But then he is intimate with queen Lurline as well and she taught him much. King Welkin was around in that infinitely remote age when the great Goorikop first cast *his* spells over Oz and made animals capable of speech in human tongues. Why, he knows spells that I scarcely wot of! He is going to be a mighty foe to have to reckon with.”

“But, great Sorceress,” cried young Ozma, consternated, “what are we to do?! Is there any way we can hope to overpower him and take back what is ours by right?”

“Yes,” answered Glinda simply. “But you must carry out my plan to the smallest detail.”

“So willingly!” assured the girl ruler.

“First, Ozma, you must choose two companions to accompany you on your journey. If your quest is successful, at its end you will confront the mighty Cloud King—alone. Then only will your capital city be returned to you... *if* it is.

“Now, Ozma, you must choose wisely and with dispatch. Every day that the Emerald City remains outside your ken your power over it will diminish, the power of the Cloud King increase.”

Now indeed did the young princess let favoritism rule. Without hesitation she declared that Dorothy of Kansas should go with her. Then she looked ruefully at the Wizard. “Forgive me, my old friend. As my second companion I choose the Scarecrow. When he is not dancing—or freezing—he is the wisest of the wise.” Perhaps too O.Z. Diggs’ recent embarrassing performance during the rain and snow storms played its part in determining the young queen’s choice.

“Your first destination will be the village lying nearest the spot where Dorothy’s house fell long ago in the land of the Munchkins and destroyed the witch of the East. You are to find a certain spiraling staircase, a very magical one, which appears

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only once in a hundred years. And this is the year!"

Witch Glinda handed her sovereign a list indicted in red lacquer ink on finest parchment: proof that Glinda had not been twiddling her thumbs the night before. "Here is what should be your program. You must follow each step to the best of your ability. Only so will you win through to success at last."

"'Tis very hard when princes 'must'," paraphrased the Oz queen. But then she smiled. "It shall be done—"to the best of my ability'."

"You have been most fortunate in a way," consoled the red sorceress. "If your capital had to be stolen, now is the ideal time. The spiral staircase I spoke of...? The stairway appears and remains visible for only three days. I have ascertained that the day of its appearance falls just four days from now."

"Oh, Glinda! then you *have* cared! You *did* foresee and understand!" The dainty Oz ruler was just short of throwing her arms about her older mentor—but a degree of formality had always been preserved between the two noble ladies.

"Now listen to this," went on Glinda. "The Cloud King and I had dealings long ago. Among other magical rites we created together three pairs of special shoes. On my own I have never been able to make any further pairs but the chance exists that you may find those original magic shoes. They are vital for your continued progress toward the Cloud Kingdom. But heed this warning: on your way to find them, do not, I conjure you!, walk upon the violet brick road for more than three days lest you and your companions be transformed into violet monkeys—under a spell that can never be broken!"

"'Violet brick road'?" Ozma almost stammered.

"Yes. You'll find a description of it in your program notes. It was built by the Gillikins on the model of the Munchkins' famous yellow road, though the northerners preferred to use their own national color in their choice of bricks. There are many strange and wonderful sights along the violet road, but do not tarry to view them! If you arrive late, you and your Emerald Citizens will have to wait for another hundred years..."

Ozma's head was awlirl with all she had to compass—and so quickly. When the red sorceress spoke of putting cares aside now and preparing to enjoy a farewell feast that evening, Ozma said, "'Feast'? Oh, I couldn't eat a thing. I'm too excited, wrought-up even, to think about food! Let me see: I—that is, we—will ride my sawhorse to reach the Munchkin village speedily. It in itself is more than a long day's walk from here."

"That's true." The witch returned to business. "And of course Sawks won't be able to climb the Vanishing Staircase and there are no magic horseshoes at the top."

There was so much to be thought of and provided for that Ozma after all attended that evening's banquet where the others were given the awful news of the Emerald City's fate and of all that must be done. But the girl ruler only toyed with a lobster in tomato aspic. "Dorothy, my friend," she said, "I wish you to be of the party that goes to try to win our city's release."

"Oh, Ozma," said the girl, who had been feeling blue all afternoon, "this makes everything all right again—and more than ever."

Everyone was up with the birds on the morning of the great departure, to assist the trio in making last preparations for the expedition. A change of garments and hair ribbons for the two girls was packed. They planned to depend on kindly wayside farmers for any change of straw the Scarecrow might need. Food was stowed in baskets: sandwiches, a thermos of water, and some large red apples.

The genial Wizard had saved his last bit of brought-along magic for this occasion. It consisted of shrinking the provision baskets to make them easier to carry. He also provided a word. It was *worg*. "That's 'grow' spelt backwards. When you say 'worg' the baskets will swell again to their normal sizes," he explained.

"And when we want to shrink them again?" asked Dorothy pertly.

The Wizard blushed. But Glinda came to the rescue. "I'll supply you with a further wishing word. When you want to

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reshrink them just say 'grow'."

They all laughed at that and trailed along outdoors where the travelers were to be given the red-carpet-treatment. The Sawhorse with Ozma and Dorothy aboard and the soft Scarecrow crammed in between pranced the length of the scarlet runner that ran from Glinda's reception hall out the front portals and down the pink marble steps to the great red world without. "Don't worry about your friends who are remaining here with me," reassured the Good Witch of the South, as she gave a light fairy kiss on the forehead of each departing guest.

Trot and Betsy waved their hankies and cried.

The Patchwork Girl did back-flips and spouted verse.

Cap'n Bill shook hands all 'round.

The Courageous Lion growled and the Hungry Tiger too.

Button Bright went back inside and got lost.

Jellia Jamb took Ozma's hand in both of hers.

The Glass Cat and the Pink Kitten yawned.

Hank the Mule chewed at a bit of sweet red grass.

Toto did nothing.

The Sawhorse ran swiftly, bounding over bushes, clumps of flowers, and cracks in the earth, in the general direction of Fuddlecumjig. Ozma and Dorothy held on as tightly as they could and the Scarecrow, crushed between them, found himself bound to their steed whether he would or no. Nominally Ozma was holding the reins and guiding her fiery mount but in fact Sawks' only attention to the will of his owner was to listen to where she intended to go and then to race there at top speed looking neither to left or right. The reins remained twined about the girl ruler's wrists and she clung for dear life to the stick that long ago, as Tip, she had inserted upright into the animal's back.

It was August and there were stubble fields often to be glimpsed under the flying hoofs of the Sawhorse. At first the racing girls attributed to them the amount of straw wisps that flew into their faces and whirled about their heads. Meanwhile the riding grew marginally more comfortable as the girls found themselves not so tightly squeezed together. But it was not until Dorothy realized that she could feel Ozma's shoulderblades pressing against her chest that she understood where all the straw was coming from.

With all the jouncing one of the Scarecrow's glove hands had shaken loose and all his stuffing had gradually been pounded out of him. His body was nothing but an empty suit of clothes between the two equestrian dames!

"Ozma!" shrieked Dorothy. "The Scarecrow has passed away!"

"Gracious, dear, I believe you're right," returned the fairy princess, feeling rather than actually seeing the thinness behind her. "He's flat as a pancake." Then, "Stop! stop!" she yelled when the Sawhorse paid utterly no attention to the pulling on the reins.

The Scarecrow said nothing. His voice-box had gone with the wind. His brains too were so jostled that he was incapable of a consecutive thought.

The Sawhorse had at last screeched to a halt and the girls

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could survey the damage. Then Dorothy had a bright idea. A hasty glance had assured her that the dusty crumbled remains of wheat stubble that remained in the nearest field would not do to restuff worthily their noble friend. "We could fold him up and put him in one of the food baskets until we reach somewhere with straw."

The Scarecrow's head heard this and smiled in agreement. It was the only physical activity he could still engage in. Well, he might frown if he wanted.

The girls dismounted and folded their friend neatly. There was just room in one basket for the suit of clothes next to the apples. The head and shoes they crammed in with their own clothes in the other basket.

Then on they flew. They passed Fuddlecumjig in a near blur. "I wish we had time to visit the Fuddles," said Dorothy. "They're such fun to try to put together," she reminisced. "Once I put a nose I picked up on the wrong person and I didn't know until I stuck his mouth back in and he gave me what-for. He was most disagreeable. He didn't like the nose; he wanted his own back. You know, they're just like putting jigsaw puzzles together. With each one being different it's awfully hard finding the pieces that match." By the time the Kansas princess finished this instructive speech Fuddlecumjig was only a memory in the distant dust.

Next stop was Oz State University, the current name of Professor Highly Magnified Wogglebug, T.E.'s institution of higher athletics, whose campus spread over some acres in the Emerald country near the Munchkin border. The Professor himself happened to be standing on the front steps of the administration building when the Sawhorse flew to a gravel-filled stop before him.

Professor Highly, nothing daunted, pronounced in stately tones, "Humble welcome, Your Highness, to our campus! And Princess Dorothy – and, yes, our friend the Sawhorse."

"What about the Scarecrow?" asked Dorothy pertly, bending to the right saddlebag, muttering "Worg", and drawing forth the head of the former ruler of Oz.

A started prexy exclaimed, "Has the Scarecrow become a basket case?"

The girls explained what had happened, then asked, "Is there any fresh straw on campus?"

"Oh, dear," regretted the professor. "For that you'd want the Ag school. It's about a mile back along the way you've just come."

"Never mind," dismissed Ozma. "Time is of the essence. We mustn't retrace a step." But she did take a minute to explain to the savant what their quest was.

"I'm so sorry your grace cannot stay over and address the student body. They would so much profit from it. However..." And he took pensive leave of the travelers.

It was no time, at the Sawhorse's breakneck pace, before the party had reached the Munchkin River. Even on the west side of the border stream things were already turning green-blue. The travelers spied peacock-colored flowers, teal turtles, and even aqua cabbages. At the river's bank the girls dismounted for a well-deserved breather.

They were sitting at ease, dangling their feet in the water and sharing a (non-habit-forming) coriander dope-stick, when the fairy princess happened to glance around and saw a strange double pair of eyes watching them.

This was a signal for a curious creature to jump forward and accost them. It was of lavender hue and had four hind legs, four long ears, and two puce balls of fur for tails. "Drnah-drnah-drnah-drnah!" the being chimed out, in imitation of a fanfare. "Behold: Tibberfoot the Double Rabbitt!"

Ozma looked at Dorothy. "Does that tell you anything, dear?"

"Not much. But I guess it comes from the Gillikin country. Check that violet tint."

"It!" cried the rabbit. "I like *that!*"

"Well, what sex are you?" demanded Dorothy. She was not much of a naturalist. Her interest in animals in general was limited to china representations of them, of which, at home in the Emerald City, she had, or had had, a large collection.^s

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

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"I am *Mister Tibberfoot*," stated the rabbit.

"How do you do, Mr. Tibberfoot," said Queen Ozma, trying to spread oil on ruffled waters. Then she made introductions, even withdrawing the Scarecrow's head from its withy confinement so that he would not feel left out.

"What brings you here?" she enquired kindly. "Your charming hue informs me that you are not a local native."

"No, I'm from up north," said Tibberfoot, confirming Dorothy's shrewd guess. "I'm on my way to the University. I've been invited to lecture on Duplicity, being as I am an expert on doubleness. I've made double quick time from Gillikinland but now I'm tuckered out and was thinking to have a drink from the river and rest a bit when I stumbled on you lot. What are you doing here?" the creature demanded rather rudely.

Ozma, ever the diplomat, explained that her party was in the same boat. And speaking of boats, had Tibberfoot seen any along the northern reach of the stream the way he must have come?

"None," assured the rabbit. "No bridges either."

"That's curious," said Ozma thoughtfully. "I'm sure I had some put in—over all the major waterways after I came to the throne. Well, thank you: that helps to determine our course from here. We must proceed south."

"And I west!" declared the lecturer, taking out his pocket watch to consult. "Oh, my thoughts and thimbles!" he cried. "I'm behind time! It will never do to be late. I'm hoping to be asked to work my talk up into a regular seminar."

And with that the strange animal scuttled off.

The riverbank descended to become a pebble-strewn verge as they moved on and the Sawhorse stumbled a good bit over the loose stones. They struggled on for nearly a mile, then on the opposite shore of the broad river they could begin to make out in the far distance the scarlet gleam of the Deadly Poppy Field of unholy memory.

"Oh, Ozma!" cried Dorothy. "I know this country very well and the yellow road can't be far off!"

"Yes," concurred the girl ruler,"and I *know* I had the river bridged to connect the parts of the famous Yellow Brick Road. We must see it soon."

But they never did. Shadows were lengthening and at last the girls saw nothing for it but to attempt to ford the river. "We can both swim, can't we?" Ozma enquired rhetorically. "If we each hang onto the stick pommel the Sawhorse can float us across."

"Good idea!" enthusiasticized Dorothy, more eager-seeming than she really felt. "And if we put the saddlebags up on Sawks' back they may not get *too* wet."

Cringing somewhat at entering the cool water fully clothed the travelers waded out. For a bit it was shallow but before long they were treading water and in the middle of the river the current was strong.

The Sawhorse's legs were powerful—but so thin—and his twig tail was not much of a rudder. Willynilly the swimming group was borne away downstream. They tried not to panic but it was not until the river described a curve toward the west that the current released them sufficiently to allow them to paddle to the eastern shore.

Here the soft strand consisted of sand and mud. The party and their belongings were all saved, but only just. The Sawhorse had somehow been turned turtle; his head was half buried in the mud and his ears were full of it. Ozma was scraping mud off her jodhpurs and Princess Dorothy was almost standing on her head trying to shake the sand out of her hair.

The girls each seized two wooden legs and pulled and tugged. The Sawhorse suddenly came unstuck with a loud skwulping sound. While Ozma helped him clean out his ears Dorothy looked about for the baskets. Since their last enlargement the travelers hadn't bothered to shrink them again. That came in handy now as making them easier to spot. One basket had lodged in a particularly spiny blue bramble. Luckily this proved to be the basket containing Scarekers' head, which was full of pins and needles anyway (to make him sharp intellectu-

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ally), so a few extra thorns didn't matter.

With steed and saddlebags in safety the dainty maidens turned their attention to their personal couture. The girls found their packed 'extras' to be only marginally damp and Dorothy soon had donned the blue and white gingham frock that Aunt Em had made for her for her latest birthday. Ozma got out of her wet riding habit and, with only a faint moue of distaste, put on the highly unsuitable emerald green jump-suit with a star design in pearls on its breast that Tourmaline had packed in a moment of madness.

It was full evening by now. "Let us make haste!" entreated the young queen. "Sawks, will you carry us like the wind?! To the Munchkin village near the tomb of the Witch of the East. And don't spare the horse!"

Rather refreshed than the reverse by his plunge in the river, followed by a healing mud bath, the Sawhorse raced flat-out and in only five minutes they reached that elusive yellow brick road. From there they could gain the Munchkin village in a trice.

The village was modeled, of course, on the one in the 1939 movie (where, in fact, it was designated a 'city'). It was pure kitsch and only sanctioned by ruler Ozma because she knew that even in Oz you didn't dare cross the M.G.M./Disney empire. Replicas of all the film props were in place. The party of visitors knew they had arrived when the road of 'normal' dingy grey-yellow bricks turned suddenly to ones of pure gold (more readily available in Oz than butter-colored plastic—but in just this one instance Ozma did not protest at cutting corners).

Right on cue, probably notified in advance by allseeing Glinda, the Mayor and all the other villagers popped out of their houses, cheering, laughing, applauding, and singing "They're Off Without the Wizard." With a bouquet of blue plastic roses in each hand the mayor scuttled up to the smartly braking Sawhorse. "Queen Ozma! Princess Dorothy! Please accept these flowers and the hospitality of our town," thus cleverly he skirted the status of the place as a village or a city. "We have been expecting you most eagerly. A feast is prepared in your honor—"

This was good news to the girls who in their flying haste had neglected to eat the sandwiches, which by tomorrow would be stale. Perhaps the mayor sensed something of their state for without further ceremony, he led the way to a vast banquet table that had been laid out in the middle of the town square. With scant attention paid to locals dressed in their finery the two Emerald City celebrities strode to the table where Dorothy, in a quick first inventory, noted the presence of:

chocolate nut drops
cakes
breads
buns
freshly churned butter
jars of home-made jellies
salads
veal cutlets
pork roasts
prime ribs of beef
potatoes
rice dishes
noodles of every kind.

All the foods were cooked to perfection and their rich aromas filled the air. It was hard to decide whether the chocolate nut drops were sweeter to gaze upon or to eat. Hot steam poured from the pastries when they were opened. The bread and jellies were set out on large platters. Dorothy's favorite of the latter was blueberry; you could tell by the way she smacked her lips after each bite.

But what was this? Was the mayor going to interrupt the feeding frenzy with speeches? Sure enough, the Munchkin villagers instead of falling to at the groaning board queued up to go through a reception line. The mayor spoke: "Queen Ozma and Princess Dorothy, we, the Munchkins, owe you so much—"

Ozma, realizing that *noblesse oblige* and doing *comme il faut*, attended nicely but had to wonder what the mayor meant. What had she ever done for these people but rubber-stamp the direc-

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tive that came from the M.G.M. front office? But the mayor was going on: "Whatever you may wish for we will surely try to grant."

This too was a poser but the girl ruler had to say something. "Friends and loyal subjects: I thank you most humbly for this beautiful reception. I have indeed a wish but, alas, it is one that you can scarcely grant. I wish for the safe return of the vanished Emerald City of Oz." The Munchkins all cried when they heard this mentioned. "But I thank you all for making us feel so at home. If, most woefully to anticipate, our capital should *not* be returned, I would choose to live here among my Munchkin people, for I love you all." Now even the members of the Lollipop Gym wept openly.

"Psst! Ozma," hissed Dorothy. "Aren't you forgetting something?"

"What would that be, sweetie?" the queen whispered back.

"The Scarecrow. Get this bunch to fetch in a load of fresh hay—if I may counsel you," added the Kansas girl, remembering her manners.

"Right-o." The queen delivered the p.s. and at once four stalwart youths hastened away to the south forty.

The feasting could proceed unbridled now. While everyone stuffed, the villagers evidently having saved their appetites all day too, the municipal band played. They were still at it when a commotion was caused by the return of the four stalwarts leading in a fifth member of their party.

"Oh, Scarecrow! how wonderful you look," shrieked Dorothy rushing into his arms, and Ozma too complimented him on his very handsome appearance.

The wise one explained. "These boys caught on at once and had me out of the saddlebags in a jiffy. The fresh hay is marvelous. And not content with stuffing me they also got one of their girl friends to press my suit and another to polish my boots." Verily, the ex-king gleamed.

But the music was what chiefly charmed the Scarecrow in the present scene. As soon as Dorothy had finished her second

portion of dessert he whirled her off in a mazurka. He did not go so far as to presume to extend to his queen an invitation to the waltz but he did dance with everyone else, including the mayor. The gaiety went on long into the night.

The mayor took a quarter of an hour to say goodnight with all sorts of cordial wishes, but at last the fatigued young queen could sink down before the mirror at her dressing table. She was feeling a little blue. No wonder. Her face looked back at her from a blue glass. Blue muslin draped the mirror which was also framed with sapphires. On blue doilies reposed her own personal blue hair brush, comb, and hair-pins. There were blue velvet drapes at the window and the bed was blue: blue spread, blue blankets, blue sheets, blue pillow-cases. A blue lamp stood on a blue bedside table.

By this time Ozma had got the idea. In a fit of pique she got out the emerald nightgown she had brought with her and put it on, ignoring the dainty cerulean negligee someone had laid out so nicely for her.

Dorothy in her own room was going through the same sort of thing. The Kansas girl, however, tried on the blue nightgown prepared for her and exclaimed that it fit perfectly. Then her eye fell on a statuette on her night-stand. It represented her dog Toto as a chihuahua and brought back memories of the days when Toto was a bull terrier and the two had had such fun laughing at the statue of him as a cairn that had been erected in the gardens of the Palace of Magic at the Emerald City. Alas, would she ever see that comic masterpiece again?^s

There was a quiet knock at Dorothy's door. "Come in," called the visitor.

In the door frame appeared an engaging young maiden who introduced herself as Jollia Jumb.

"How delightful," quoth Dorothy. "Your name reminds of someone in the Emerald City whom I like very much."

"That's the idea," said the girl with a curtsy. "Everything here is meant to recall to you and your celebrity friends your

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

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visit here long ago.”

“You must be dreaming,” said the guest. “I’ve never been here before in my life.”

Jollia blushed. “No, of course it was Judy Garland—”

Dorothy frowned. Judy had not been a favorite of hers since way back in 1943 when the star turned her down for a crack at the role of herself in *The Wizard of Oz, Part II*.[§] “But Miss Garland was never here either,” she protested. “Only on a Hollywood sound stage.” She paused. “Maybe you mean Fairuza Balk...? I understand she refuged to Oz after she crashed in *Return to Oz* and was never able to get another film role^{§§}.”

“Miss Balk did visit,” admitted Jollia, chastened. “She’s commemorated in Klab Azuriaf, the maid who is attending on queen Ozma.”

“Oh, well, that settles that then,” said Dorothy, relieved.

“Pardon me,” pursued Jollia. “May I ask?: do you like the statue of Toto?”

“Very much,” confessed the princess.

“Then you may have it,” offered the maid.

“Why, thank you: I think I’ll extend my porcelain collection with figurines of Toto as all different breeds of dogs. This will go beautifully there.”

When Jollia had gone Princess Dorothy, aware that Disney was watching her on closed-circuit t.v., took care to say her prayers audibly.

§ See *The Vegetable Man of Oz*.

§§ At least, up until the time of the events chronicled herein. See *The Water Boy*, *The Craft*, *American History X*, or *The Sopranos*, among others. Editor’s notes.

"Did you find out where the violet brick road starts?" asked Dorothy.

"Oh, how stupid of me," cried Ozma. "I did not think to enquire last night... I'll ask the mayor at the first opportunity."

"Yeah," agreed her chum. "We'll get him to gather everybody in the village square. Somebody must know."

"Pardon me, dear," said the queen, slipping on her stockings, "but if the mayor doesn't know is it likely any of his citizens do? After all, the violet road is not a security risk. According to Glinda's program of procedure—and indeed my own recollections—that road is the main thoroughfare from the Munchkin into the Gillikin country. And it branches off the yellow road somewhere right around here."

Not long afterwards the girls were seated at the breakfast table, where, nothing daunted by having gorged themselves the night before, they tucked into blueberry waffles with blueberry syrup and blueberry juice and bluejohn on the side. The Scarecrow joined them, just to kibbitz, and the village mayor sat ceremonially at the foot of the table.

Talk was of the Vanishing Spiral Staircase. "You should have no trouble in reaching it," opined His Honor. "It is three days' journey from here. With the speed and surety that your wonderful Sawhorse is capable of, you should be there in no time at all."

"Oh, I'm sending him back to Glinda," remarked Ozma off-hand. "I promised I'd only have two companions on my quest."

"What a dumb thing to do," burst out Dorothy before she could stop herself. Then, "Oh, Your Highness!" she gasped, getting out of her seat and dropping to the floor out of sheer *lése majesté*. "Can you ever forgive me?!"

The Scarecrow gave her moral support. "If you will pardon me, my Sovereign," he put in sagely, "it's not the brightest. Just when speed is of the essence and our time strictly delimited, to send away the fleet Sawhorse who would be in his element

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galloping over the well-paved Violet Road..? Besides, he's already been with us—and invaluable—for twenty-four hours: Who determines that now is the appropriate cut-off time for you to become two-companioned?"

Ozma blushed. She wasn't usually so dense. She wondered what had come over her.

Fond farewells were made all round. The villagers gathered en masse to wave handkerchiefs and render a reprise of "Ding-Dong, the Witch Is Dead." Then the travelers were off like the wind—or even wildfire, as Sawks' furious gait had been compared to. They ran through the wilderness that surrounded the picturesque artificial hamlet and came without ado to the branching of the violet brick road four miles out along the yellow one.

From there on the air fair whistled around them, hurting the ears of those able to feel pain. All held on for dear life. The passengers seated behind begged Ozma to command the horse to slow down, at least a trifle, but she heard nothing, the pleading words ripped away in the hurricane wind.

Finally, however, the girl ruler began to sense that their speed was excessive. She leaned down and screamed in her steed's ear, "Please abate your speed, my worthy champion. We cannot go on at this pace. I can feel at my back that the Scarecrow's stuffing is all sifting down into his pants-legs."

With providence the Scarecrow had foreseen something of the sort and after breakfast had requested Jollia Jumb to sew his trouser cuffs to the tops of his boots. The obliging maid had been glad to carry out the simple task.

Now the party came to a halt and time was taken to collect their thoughts and to lay the straw (read, 'hay') man out upon the violet bricks and vigorously pummel him back into well distributed shape again.

By the end of a few more hours' ride the violet road began to narrow in. The condition did not improve. Quite the contrary: after twenty minutes of jittery avoidance of potholes the road, like the Humboldt River, just 'dried up' in an indeterminate

scatter of loose bricks.

The adventurers were sufficiently entertained, however, by the peculiar flora and fauna that flourished all about in this remote place. Multifruit trees bore ripening apples, oranges, and papayas all at the same time. They spotted two-headed beavers and a giraffe with short legs. "Mr. Tibberfoot would feel right at home here, wouldn't he?" said Dorothy, pointing out a rabbit with four tails, not a measly mere two.

They pushed on over violet brick-dust but by the time they came to the end of the forest there was no pretense that they were following a road or even path any longer. Violet though the last vestiges of the road might be the party was still in the Munchkin country. The trees, hills, underbrush, and sky were blue.

One curious feature, as the travelers proceeded, was that the bluery appeared to have been flattened, perhaps, thought Ozma worriedly, by some cosmic catastrophe that she had not been apprised of, something like the meteor crash in Siberia in 1908.[§] All the trees lay on their sides, whence already stout limbs grew skyward, and the bushes lay with roots exposed almost like legs struggling impotently to get up and walk.

The Scarecrow tripped over something and when his friends looked closely they saw a blue signpost lying on its side, whose finger-board pointed vainly at the sky and said: *THIS WAY TO SIDEWAYS*.

Here at least was proof that somebody had been here before. It didn't take the travelers long to right the post, after which they duly set off in the direction it seemed to indicate. Forty feet on they found another signpost, this one usefully not lying on its side. Three boards pointed respectively to: "*SIDEWAYS, 5 HOURS' WALK*"; "*SIDEWAYS, 1 DAY'S WALK SIDEWAYS*"; and "*SIDEWAYS: STRAIGHT AHEAD 100 YARDS*".

Dorothy sniffed contemptuously. "Do they actually expect us to walk sideways for a whole day?"

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

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Ignoring the signs, the four companions ascended a small hill well outside the verges of the forest. Thence they looked toward a small town. They sauntered down the far side of the hill, pretty well knowing what to expect. They had all been around Oz a long time. Nor were they deceived. When they got into the village streets they found all the buildings lying on their sides.

Granted, the town's inhabitants were not all lying down on their sides, but they all walked sideways. Even the domestic animals appeared to have been trained to do the like. A farmer's cart lay on its side, its 'upper' wheels circling idly in the faint breeze.

The Scarecrow wondered mildly, though aloud, "How can they carry any loads that way?"

Unluckily, the farmer, who was vainly trying to make his ox drag the cart forward with its underwheels scraping through the dust, heard the hay man's speech. He sidled over angrily and offered a nonsensical explanation about having taken the precaution to load his produce into the cart sideways.

The dainty girl ruler of Oz intervened. Ignoring all the idiotic sidewayfulness, she requested of the farmer directions to the Vanishing Spiral Staircase.

The farmer sensed he was in the presence of someone of importance. Perhaps Ozma's coronet, strapped on above her waterproof ear poppies, helped him reach that conclusion.

"Oh, it's quite straightforward, Your Grace—I mean, sideways!" the rustic corrected himself. "This street turns into Door-knob Mountain Road. Follow it out of town and sideways on for about a day's walk. There you'll be in shooting distance of the stair."

The land of Sideways appeared not to be limited to just the one town the tourists had seen. Buildings lying on their sides dotted the peaceful rural landscape. Well ahead of schedule the travelers could afford to 'walk' as directed, so they gave the Saw-horse surcease of labors and he ambled along at their side. They had time to admire the curious scenery where everything that

could be sideways was sideways. At evening they came to a small sideways inn.

"How do we get in?" wondered Dorothy. But a side window gaped a mere four feet above the ground so they stepped in easily.

Once inside the sideways tap-room they side-stepped the bustling landlord, then asked if they could get dinner. With genial gestures of welcome he showed them to a side table where they ordered from a bill of fare written along the side of the card. The selection of sidewise dishes was not great.

"Can you eat a whole side of beef?" Dorothy asked her sovereign playfully.

"Hardly. I think I'll settle for toast buttered just on one side... And the pineapple sidewise cake sounds good."

The dishes were served on plates standing on their sides so there was not much gladness there. However, the waiter set down carry-tray and all; the diners placed the tray between them and managed to make a meal of sorts of the food that had run off onto it.

The Scarecrow, not taking part in the repast and distressed and bored by the horrid sight, sidled over and engaged the landlord in talk. "How did your country get into this situation?" he asked. "Do you lie under an enchantment or something?"

"Well, yes," admitted the fellow, quickly giving up the pretense that going at everything sideways was fun. "Some of our countrymen long ago had the misfortune to cross the wicked witch of the East. She vowed vengeance and cast a spell over town and country, turning everything on its side, and worse: so twisting men's mind that they would seem to *like* sidewayfulness. It was only through singular mercy that we were allowed not to spend our whole lives lying on our sides.

"We had, however, to sidle and sidestep wherever we went. How often have I tried in secret to walk as you people do but always I trip and stumble and fall down on my side. And sometimes it is hours before I can get up again."

The man's talk was interesting and when the ladies had

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retired to the modest room they would share, each lying on her side of the bed, the Scarecrow sought out his genial host again and the two went for a sideways stroll through the late-evening lanes. They even took in a sideshow that some enterprising Barnum had set up in a nearby field.

Next day the leisurely journey continued until about mid-day the quartet entered another forest, this one even gloomier than the last. The way was now getting steeper and it was hard to make out what lay ahead. The forest was closely grown with elm, birch, and ash and despite the denseness and even darkness at noon seemed to be alive with activity of all sorts. Small woods animals skipped from place to place. Lizards rummaged under dead leaves. Bluebirds and jays fluttered among the branches, sometimes darting to the ground to stir and seek for worms.

Suddenly the dim and upward-going path came to an abrupt end at a great thick oaken door. Above it in the living rock was etched:

DOORKNOB MOUNTAIN. ENTER AT OWN RISK.