

The
Crown
of **OZ**

by Michael Michanczyk
& March Laumer

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

Sweden U.S.A.
1991

The Crown of Oz
Copyright © 1994 by March Laumer
& Michael J. Michanczyk
All rights reserved.

First provisional edition: 1991
Second provisional edition: 2006

Decorations copyright © 1978 by Erté.
Additional text by Paul S. Ritz.
Art copyright © by Ruth Tuttle.

Published with the long-standing
encouragement of
Contemporary Books Inc., Chicago

The Vanitas Press

Opium Books Series number 35

C H A P T E R

O N E

The Purpleys were on the move again.

They had been quiescent for years and years—or was it centuries?—but now they had begun to well up and make their presence felt once more. In small details here and there perceptive people began to be aware of greater purplitude. Lilacs in May reached heights of rich red-violetness that had not been seen in living memory. Violets became so violet they were almost black, and black pansies got so dark they burst through and came out, as it were, on the other side in a purple so pale it was like looking at the sun through violet veils. Everything lavender became heliotrope and everything puce appeared magenta.

After some weeks or months of that, persons began to be somewhat concerned. In the Gillikin land of Oz all things were by now so purple they couldn't safely get any purpler. Entities that normally never were that color started to turn, like the water in lakes and streams, like grass and leaves, and people's skins!

Simultaneously with this change an alteration in human (even animal?) personality gradually began to assert itself. Gillikins became a thing unheard of: aggressive nationalists! They started to do unneighborly things like forcing visitors to the country to

THE CROWN OF OZ

dye their hair purple, the better to blend with the general hair hue.

Viewing from the perspective of infinite time, we can see that they ought not to have got so worked up. What Gillikins were experiencing was a non-permanent concomitant of something that, according to tradition, had to take place periodically if the varicolored lands of Oz were to maintain their individuality. It was all part of the general plan for Oz laid down eons ago by the fairy Lurline or the giant Goorikop (authorities differ as to who was to blame) or whoever else may have magicized the magic land.

She, he, it, or they had ordained that primal motives in the very earth itself should control the coloredness of each country. These 'motives' were linked to agents deep in the core of the planet: the flow of waters, the gliding of rock faults, the very seething of the molten magma. They found expression in red volcano outboilings in the land of the Quadlings, the undammable flooding of the blue Munchkin River, the wide wide flats of yellow sand (the "Old Winkies") in the yellow land, and, in Gillikinland, in infinitely deep purple pools in dark violet forests.

These pools were not, however, pools of anything mundane like water. They were pools of liquid air; the pools had no bottoms that anyone had ever been able to find. Perhaps it was because they were so enormously deep that they gave the impression of holding back, of not dominating their respective region so much as did the broad blue river in the Munchkin land or the vast sand stretches of the open Winkie country.

Now that was changed. The pools had filled to the brim with soft-folding, all-enveloping thick air and the holes failed to contain the effluvium. It spread out over the ground in the deep dark violet forests. One might expect it to drown the trees in time. In fact it only made them flourish like purple bay trees! Unthinking people, seeing the flooded forests, might suppose it was water but when, after a ducking in the inundation, they found their clothes were not wet, they might

have to suppose again.

The time for such speculations was, however, not yet. The pools of the Gillikin forests were not a tourist attraction. Very few people were aware that they were there and the individuals who had actually visited them could be numbered upon the fingers of three hands. Not Mrs. Yoop nor Princess Gayelette nor the Kimbaloons nor Joe, King of the Uplanders, was more than very theoretically aware of the pools' existence. The only beings who looked upon them daily, or rather nightly, were certain owls who made their home in the forests and they were taciturn creatures who passed on no rumors or sounded alarms. They — and the Trolls, of course.

“Purpleys” I heard someone say, rather as if expecting to hear that the phenomena thus designated were sentient beings who, motivated by territorial designs, crept out of holes in the ground and ranged abroad, spreading consternation if not actual destruction. Let me correct the misapprehension at once. Occasionally Purpleys could and did appear as discreet individuals, distinguishable as smaller or larger conglomerations of cloud or fog but they had no separate personalities or intellects. If they were guided by anything that could at all be called a will, it was not a will subject to any influences brought to bear on individual Purpleys. One could as well reason with a Purpley as with a glacier or chastise one as effectively as an ape might punish an earthquake.

Thus when the Purpleys got on the move there was no stopping them. This was the season to be purple and the Purpleys were making the most of it. After all, it had been a very long time since they had last had their day. The primal forces in the other three principal lands of Oz had all in turn waxed supreme since the Purpleys' last pullulation. Indeed, it was so long since the entities representing the “primal force” in Munchkin blueness had been dominant that their very name had fallen out of the folk consciousness. The “Crimsons” of the South were only to be found named in the most ancient extant documents. The Old Winkies, on the other hand, were a concept still used by

THE CROWN OF OZ

old-fashioned nurses to scare their babies and keep them in line. "Behave! Or those windy Old Winkies will cover you up in sand," they said.

Contrary to the opinion of those who may have flown around the world and never observed any "Oz continent" beneath them, the magic land is not on another planet. Just as angels and miracles are evident to those who are truly religious and visions quite tangible to genuine mystics, though not to sceptics looking with the naked and jaundiced eye, so Oz exists for the dedicated Ozophile and right here on planet Earth.

The fabled land shares in prevailing earth weather conditions. In the northern hemisphere the planet's winds as a general rule blow eastwards. In Oz this resulted over time in the sands of the Deadly Desert sifting in over the yellow land of the Winkies. Dry yellow winds carried the soil of Winkieland in over purple Gillikinland. By fairly recent times the xanthification of the purple land had progressed to where fully a sixth of what had been Gillikin territory was now shown on maps as being Winkie.[§]

But now that the Purpleys were on the move that oddness about the northeast Winkie border was the first thing that, almost as if they had minds and could make decisions, the Purpleys set out to rectify. A wave of purplitude rolled down from the mountains and out of the forests and up from the bottomless wells and swamped the Winkie frontier from Flathead Mountain to Loonville. People in Corabia, Double Up, Wackajammy, Tidy Town, Hotchinpotch, the Border Moor, and Winkie Marshland woke up one morning to find their fields of buttercups and dandelions turned in a night to beds of aubrietia.

Graver yet, the Gillikin people, made bumptious and vaunting by the newfound power of purple, made a surge southward, carrying their purplitude with them, to threaten the verdure of royal Ozma's own emerald land itself!

§ See *A Fairy Queen in Oz* where this theme is developed at length. editor's note.

C H A P T E R

T W O

Ozma, beloved Queen of all Oz, found herself simultaneously on her throne and in a quandary. She tried to shake off the latter but it was no go. What was she to do in respect of the large vat of green liquid that reposed three steps down in front of the dais?

She turned for counsel to her new favorite, Fattywiggins, also known as “Fattyw” or ‘Fatty” or, by those with whom she was not popular, as “Lardtub”. Fattyw nodded. Yes, there was no denying that the vat was there. She could see it just as plain. “See?” said Fatty. “It says ‘O.Z. Diggs Specialties’ in bright red letters on the base. I should say that the vat is made of plastic, only plastic hasn’t been invented yet.”

“No, but when it is,” asserted the Queen, “it will be found to be very much like our own native composition material, oztic. Yes, I think this is oztic. But isn’t the liquid a beautiful pellucid color?” Ozma exclaimed with delight.

“Mmmm—and it sits so still in the vat,” commented Fattyw.

“‘Sits’ did you say, darling?” The Princess regnant turned to look with interest. “Do you think of fluids as ‘sitting’? We were

THE CROWN OF OZ

always taught to say 'lying'."

"That's old-fashioned," instructed her young mentor. "It's the wave of the future to say 'sit' for everything; papers sit on the table, buildings sit in their grounds. Saves having to think, you see. It used to be that tall things 'stood', flat things 'lay'. But now we don't have to sprain our brains trying to remember if what we're talking about is tall or flat, or somewhere in between, and we just say 'sit' for everything."

"You make it all seem so clear, dear. I'm sure you're right. Now I know those chunks of what resembles floating on top are in fact ice. But what are those large formations underneath?" The girl ruler shuddered delicately.

"I don't like to think about them either," confessed the tubby pre-teen. "Let's wait and let the Wizard surprise us by identifying them for us."

"The wonderful Wizard has outdone himself this time," chirruped Ozma, just to be on the safe side. She could see that the crowd of courtiers in the Presence Chamber were getting restive and she well understood that they might be having qualms about the prospect of being invited to sample the poisonous-looking decoction. "I know he has sent us what will prove a magnificent treat," she said, trying to reassure them all but chiefly, perhaps, herself.

Everyone nodded distractly at what their ruler had said. Few were vocal. One or two, who didn't know what to think, shook their heads and spake not a word but, like dumb statues or breathing stones, stared each on other and looked deadly pale.

Ozma laughed nervously and made some remark about the "general acclaim", at which Fatty eyed her sceptically. She decided to call Her Majesty's bluff.

"What's the story?" she said.

"About the unusual preparations, you mean? Well, you know my twenty-first birthday is coming up again soon—"

"Yes, I know," murmured Ozma's devoted maiden in waiting. How could she not? There were banners up about it all around town and placards proclaiming the great fête to be held

on the twenty-first. There were even lampoons. Fatty had one in her pocket. It ran:

“Though she’s all wet,
We’re in her debt,
So don’t forget:
A present yet!
For Ozma on her birthday.
Oh, what fun!
As usual she’ll be
just twenty-one.”

One or two to whom the girl had shown the squib suspected she had written it herself. Fattyw for her part put the blame on Scraps, the Patchwork Girl, poet laureate to the beloved Queen of Oz, and it could not be denied that the effusion was in Scraps’ style. Needless to say, Fatty had not let Ozma see the verse—so far.

“The Wizard *would* insist,” went on the princess, “that the occasion required some special effort on his part. If anyone could provide a treat that would be marveled at and talked about for a long time to come, he was sure it would be he. This time he thought he’d like to try something in the way of an unusual flavoring, or even a combination of such savors, as it might be clams and chocolate or garlic ice cream. So apparently that’s what we’re up against in the vat before us. He assures me it tastes like nothing on earth. No wonder people are a bit concerned.”

“Are we meant to drink it right now?” queried the younger girl. “It seems rather a lot.”

Ozma laughed, enchanted. “Oh, dear me, no. It will first be served generally at the party tonight. We’ll have all the Emerald City to help us get it down. I’m merely requested now to give it my seal of approval, helped by my good friends here at court.”

The crowd burst into applause at this speech and Ozma smiled benignly.

Fattywiggins murmured confidentially, “What’ll it be like, ma’am? Have you any advance information?”

But here she drew a blank. Ozma spoke as from the Throne,

THE CROWN OF OZ

where, indeed, she was. "As for the flavor in the Wizard's brew, I have not sounded him, nor he delivered his purpose any way therein."

This left her little attendant back at square one. She essayed a prediction. "I guess there's no hope it will turn out to be nice lime... or spearmint?"

The gathering at the customary Wednesday audience broke into light laughter in anticipation of the wise and witty rejoinder that Princess Ozma was sure to make to that. The speech when it came left nothing to be desired in astuteness. The fairy ruler said, "One and all shall be invited in good time to sample the drink. In audience assembled we'll determine what it tastes like. Meanwhile, as we await the arrival of its capable creator—" Here Ozma could not prevent herself glancing at her watch. "I've commanded that the receptacle with its prized contents be carried to the kitchens, there to be decanted into a proper cut-diamond punch bowl. Upon the return of the preparation we shall begin our sampling."

C H A P T E R

T H R E E

Xavier Jaxon from Nossex had proven to be an asset in the combined laboratory and workshop of O.Z. Diggs, wizard of Oz. He had some knowledge of chemistry and what the Wizard regarded as a high mechanical aptitude. By now Diggs had come to appreciate how useful an assistant could be. Gosh, the amount of leg-work it saved him! Sometimes he wondered how he had ever got along before without such a handy piece of furniture to rely on.

Today the main project in hand was a slight, nearly frivolous one. They were concocting a special drink for the delectation of their beloved Girl Ruler. Xave was working at the retorts when the Wizard came in and said: "Is the punch ready for sampling?"

"Oh, yes, sir." Jaxon turned in some surprise. "The waiters fetched it quite some time ago."

"Oh, foop," cried Diggs. "I wanted to give it a last taste before it was taken to the presence chamber."

"Sorry! sir. I was sure you had given it your imprimatur when you were in last."

"Oh, I suppose I did.

"You know, that sea-mint flavor was not the easiest to

THE CROWN OF OZ

achieve. The chemical make-up is complicated. Not like citrus flavors, for instance. More like apple or watermelon that have so far never been synthesized for flavoring sweets the way lemon and orange have.”

“Yes, sir,” said Xavier meekly. “What are you going to call it?”

“Some sort of ‘julep’, I suppose, it being mint,” muttered Diggs thoughtfully.

“A tulip?” Xave only had normal hearing and his mentor *had* mumbled. “It’s scarcely the right color, sir.”

The Wizard guffawed. “Not ‘tulip’, my dear boy. A julep! A sea-mint julep that would make a Kentucky colonel go rigid—and not because of any alcohol in it either.”

“Oh, well, there wouldn’t be that, would there, sir?” said Jaxon. “This being Oz and all.”

“No, that’s right. It’s just like a Sunday school here,” agreed Diggs. Nor must it be suspected that there was even a hint of irony in the Wizard’s speech. Like all certified Oz residents he was a card-carrying teetotaler, and this without his ever having been asked whether he wanted to be or not!

“The flavor of the julep is a real triumph,” praised Jaxon. “All credit to you, sir. And if I do say so, the emerald green color is up to stuff as well.”

“Verily!” Neither was the Wizard skimping with praise where it was due. “Ordinary food dye would have made the drink opaque but the emerald hue you came up with is as water-clear and sparkling as the gem itself. Together we’ve concocted what I think Ozma will long remember.”

“. . . ‘long remember’,” echoed Jaxon dreamily. He did a lot of remembering in these days so soon after his seemingly miraculous translation to Oz.[§] At times it came out in conversation.

“Professor,” he said. Sometimes the Wizard was thus addressed when in the laboratory, although if he had ever been at college, which was not certain, it was only in the role of a

§ See *Fattywiggins and the Caresso-Pigs in Oz*. Editor’s note.

tourist and for half an hour. "Professor, you know what I find so strange?"

"Pray tell."

"That I *don't* find my recent adventures so strange!"

"You mean that, for instance, you found nothing odd about talking pigs on a train, carrying a lot of food supplies and luggage?"

"It all seems more like a dream than actual, if strange, reality. You know how everything in a dream, no matter how outrageous, seems at the time perfectly expectable and not surprising. That's how this all seems to me: a dream from which I don't wake up."

'That's exactly what it is,' thought Diggs wryly, but he wasn't going to tell Xavier that and risk spoiling everything. Instead he said, "Yes, and in a dream quite often you *know* it's a dream; can even discuss the dreamlike quality of it all and plan what you'll do when you wake up."

"Just so. And then of course I'd read Beatrix Potter as a child."

"What's that got to do with it?" demanded the Wizard, who was not a literary type.

"Well, you know: talking rabbits and all. So somehow it seemed quite natural to have talking pigs, with hands and feet, upon a train."

"You were ready," quoth Diggs oracularly.

"For . . . ?"

"For transferring to another plane as soon as anything the least bit traumatic happened. In your case the train wreck. You, and apparently they whole rest of your party, crossed the line." More oraculosity.

"To the invisible country, you mean?"

"Mmm. That's when you swam into my ken—"

"Yes, the water was pretty deep in that canal. I seem to remember—"

"Better not," said the Wizard, who wanted to get on with his own reminiscing. "You see, I'd long had my spectro-screen trained on those mist wraiths—"

THE CROWN OF OZ

"The Norreganes?"

"Exactly — wherever any of them might be. It appears it's not all that seldom that detachments of the dread beings make it out into the so-called 'real' world. You did realize that it was they that tipped the train into the canal?"

"From what I've learned since I could guess as much," admitted the Englishman.

"They're holy terrors, really," sighed Diggs. "We have to keep constant tabs on them. Fortunately they do confine themselves mostly to the Invisible Country, which we keep monitored round the clock —"

"On the spectroscreen?"

"That's right. It's my own invention, you know. Well, the great Glinda did help — a little," said the Wizard disingenuously. "It's an improvement on Ozma's Magic Picture because it covers the whole spectrum of sense perceptions, hence the name."

"All except one, of course," put in Jaxon deferentially.

"Name one!" said O.Z., flaring up.

"Well, the sense of feel is missing, isn't it, professor? One doesn't actually touch-sense what is presented on the screen."

"We're workin gon it! We're working on it!" insisted the savant. "But come; we're wasting time, my dear chap," went on Diggs, nettled. "If we don't get ourselves to the throne room, we're going to miss out on the royal tasting of the punch."

C H A P T E R

F O U R

There was a sharp flourish of trumpets, the doors of the great reception chamber were opened wide, and the Royal Kapellmeister of the court of the Palace of Magic strode in. He was dressed officiously (as he would have said, but then his knowledge of Ozish was limited): a bright green uniform with epaulettes, a cross-band of iridescent fabric over the chest, and a wonderful high hat (even indoors and in the presence of his sovereign). Full mustachios and mutton-chop whiskers increased the size of his, in advance, full face. The Herr Kapellmeister was in charge of all musical arrangements for the approaching celebration.

“Greetinks, meine gnädige Prinzessin!” hailed the bandmaster with all due respect. “Ins besonders upon the occasion of your birthday fast approaching.”

Ozma had been expecting to see the Wizard but, “Greetings to you in return, Herr Music Director,” she replied genially enough. “How are things proceeding with the music for the ball?”

“Vielen tvickling Walzer, mit einsbegriffen Marschen, Foxtrots, Minuetten, und Sarabandes wird es geben—no doubt!” reassured the Kapellmeister.

THE CROWN OF OZ

"Everything is progressing then with a certain swiftness?" Ozma understood. "I hear the fairies have been practicing for weeks now on a splendid choral piece with which they'll entertain."

"Ach, I see you should know in advance what to expect," deplored the musician. "Das hätte übrigens ein surprise should remain."

For no immediately apparent reason, unless to tease the Germany by a countering absorption in French, Fattywiggins, during the exchange in semi-German, had taken up a copy of Bergson's *Creative Evolution* and was ostentatiously reading it with concentration. Fatty, who often got things wrong, had thought to impress the spectators with her own show of "astuteness". In fact, all she got thought of as was rude. Alas, the girl had already acquired something of a reputation as a wise-acre, an opinion borne out for the onlookers by the pert remarks she had just been offering on the topic of the mysterious punch.

Suddenly, as part of a miraculous mid-air occurrence accompanied by a further slight musical fanfare, Fattyw found her book snatched from her and deposited on a nearby tabouret, while in her hands remained a hyacinth-hued box in the shape of a heart. Non-plussed and not knowing what to do with the box, the girl thrust it behind her, marveling as she did so over the nature of this new-arrived-at Land of Oz, where anything might happen and usually did.

To cover her confusion, and determined to insert some astuteness, *and* French, into the talk, she said, "Dear Ozma, I hope you are also going to allow some *musique moderne* to be played at the celebration...?"

"Why, Fatty, I wouldn't want anyone to feel slighted at my not arranging for—er, *musique moderne*," returned the ruler.

"'Moozeek moderne'! Musik modern?" huffed the Kapellmeister. "Was ist das?"

"Yes, Fatty, just what did you have in mind?" pursued Ozma.

"For your celebrations to come off as really contemporary and elite," said the younger girl, "I think there ought to be *musique*

moderne, and of the very avant-garde school to boot." She had not been reading *Creative Evolution* for nothing and now she found herself with the chance to show off her knowledge of music, French, and philosophy all at the same time. She at once discourse on the *élan vital*.

"Musique moderne," muttered the bandmaster. "Avant-garde school. I should live zo long!" He, like everyone at court, had had it up to there with the young upstart from the Home Counties who was causing disorders both in and outside of the Palace of Magic.

To the lovely fairy ruler of Oz he wanted always to display the greatest courtesy, and especially now when it was going to be her birthday, but he could *not* disguise his dissatisfaction at her paying so much attention to Fattywiggins with her overweening demands and spurious veneer of French culture. 'Ozma ought to be listening to her own people!' spluttered the German inwardly. As soon as Fatty was finished with the *élan vital* he said, "But—!"

"Is there any need for discussion?" the princess cut him off almost sharply.

"Er—nein, Your Majesty, the situation is ganz klar to me," stammered the musical director.

"Very well then. We shall have musique moderne at the birthday fête. You may take your congé for the nonce," declared the gracious queen, going a bit French herself.

"Ja wohl! Gnädige Hochheit," rumbled the Kapellmeister. He brought his heels together with a clack, saluted, and bowed. He was red-faced and the temperature under his collar had mounted but he still preserved the amenities as best he could. It was not the Princess' fault; no, it was that of that wretched butter-ball from outer Earth.

Still, as he neared the portal of the reception chamber and could now no longer be heard from the throne, he was unable to resist hissing to the two guardsmen on duty, "Musik moderne also! Und, what's more, aus dem Schule der avant-garde!" He threw up his hands and hurried out.

THE CROWN OF OZ

Guardsmen Lapstart blushed but Private Draxton, who was half cracked (but now where it showed), winked merrily in all directions.

C H A P T E R

F I V E

Princess Ozma had by now practically forgotten about the expected arrival of the Wizard of Oz and was going on to other matters. The little midair commotion had not escaped the notice of the alert fairy and she now turned back to Miss Fattywiggins, who was wondering what on earth she should do with the purple box in the shape of a heart. She couldn't keep holding it behind her back forever, nor could she, as she felt most inclination to do, drop it like a hot potato.

Suddenly the girl felt something at her wrists like the fluttering of butterfly wings and with a jerk she brought the tinfoil-covered box round in front of her, then uttered a mild shriek. A pint-sized fairy was dancing on the lid.

"Welcome, Peaseblossom!" called Ozma, still giving proof of her alertness. "What have you brought there?" She had been well aware all along that Fatty was hiding something and not anything the child herself was responsible for.

Peaseblossom genuflected energetically and cried, "Hail, o Princess. I bring you advance greetings from Her Feyness Queen Lurline on the occasion of your natal day. Also this little memento to sweeten the time of waiting until you shall be full twenty-one again."

THE CROWN OF OZ

"It is most generous of the Queen to forward this gracious gift," declared Ozma.

"Her Feyness also sends word that the box contains a surprise other than the sweetmeats themselves," warned the fairy ambassador.

It will not astonish the reader to hear that this exchange had excited the never reticent Fattywiggins beyond the point of self-control. For minutes now, she had been licking her lips and now she brushed the fairy off the purple box lid and began fumbling with the catch.

Her renommée as a trenchergirl had preceded her and now she informally announced another of her claims to fame. "I'm Her Majesty's official taster," she told, fairly drooling in her eagerness to get her jaws on the dainty morsels that her soul divined lay in the box.

"Is that so, your highness?" enquired the tiny fairy, though she could scarcely expect that the gluttonous girl would lie right in the Oz ruler's face.

"Why, yes," assented Ozma. "That is our honored guest's court function while she is here."

"Ah, well," accepted Peaseblossom, "I dare say it will be in order then if the young lady takes the first piece... although I did have an impression that Queen Lurline meant the sweets for Your Grace alone."

Fattyw had by now had her way with the slightly recalcitrant lid. She removed it. Now her eye roved over the nut-covered puce-colored chocolates before her. Some of the sweets were wrapped in magenta foil. She took up one of the latter, deftly skinned it, and put it in her mouth. She noted that it had a jelly-like center and a flavor of violet. Chewing, she reached for a second piece.

Ozma made a little moue of disappointment that her favorite did not offer her any of the sweets. But "How are the chocolates, Fatty?" she asked tolerantly.

"Wait a minute," mumbled the girl. "I can't tell until I've had a few more." She put down the box on top of Bergson on the

tabouret and began to grab with both hands.

Suddenly Fattyw dropped the sweetmeats she was holdind and stuck her hand in her mouth.

"What luck is this?" she cried and drew forth a hard green candy center all gucky with half-chewed violet chocolate. In a moment a second such as disgorged.

Princess Ozma peered. "They look very much like emeralds," she vouchsavored.

Peaseblossom laughed delightedly. "Quite right, your majesty. Those are the surprise I told you about."

"Some surprise," grunted Fattywiggins, making a third trip to her mouth. This time she brought out a largist piece of a white tooth. Luckily it was an autumnally on-hanging baby one.

"Oh, my dear, are you all right?" said the Oz queen, concerend.

"I'm fine, your grace. Lucky that the hard centers aren't any larger. I could have choked. As it is, I think I've swallowed one of them."

"Oh, dear, and I was just about to say to Peaseblossom how pleased we are with the charming confections and to tell Queen Lurline that so far we hadn't had any accidents with the 'surprise'."

Fattywiggins had her own assessment of just how charming the gift was. As she nursed her aching jaw and gave over gobbling any more of the sweets, she planned just what her revenge should be. It took the form of declaring a private war on all Queen Lurline's fairy band!

“All roads lead to Nome” was a saying that had a very brief currency—of about a week—some years previously, but a currency only among the Nomes, that curious folk, and their allies, who had been thinking of taking over the Emerald City. Curmudgeonly old Roquat had suggested the motto, inasmuch as he was the ruler of the Nomes and leader of the expedition, and was planning to apply the name of his tribe to the conquered capital.

After Queen Ozma of Oz gave Roquat a case of amnesia and the takeover bid collapsed, the catch phrase fell into disuse, and the new town name reverted to the Alaska village, to which in fact no roads led. As for “All roads lead to the Emerald City”, that was too much of a mouthful and did not run trippingly on the tongue; it never became popular. Nevertheless, within Oz, the statement was true.

Not that there were “all” that many roads. For a long period the only road in Oz worth mentioning was the road of yellow bricks (later renamed “the Yellow Brick Road”) which, confusingly, ran principally through the *blue* country of the Munchkins and on to the capital. If there were any roads elsewhere no one had ever described them. But with the coming of Ozma as re-

gent all that was changed. Now there were roads everywhere, even in Gillikinland.

The country of the Gillikins was a region of rugged mountain terrain, formerly largely unexplored and somewhat backward in comparison to the other color-keyed lands of Oz. Now, however, during the term of office of the great Ozma, who was directing all her energies toward making progress the byword in her realm, all parts of the northern land were being better bound by roads. In particular a beautiful new highway of yellow brick, an offshoot of the Munchkin thoroughfare, now stretched across the mountains and through the land, right to the lip of the Soup Sea itself.

At the moment with which we are concerned two travelers were making their way south from that same Sea along the new road, and in their company three cows. The party were already growing a little weary, having left their last night's lodging at daybreak, but still they were light-hearted and chatted of more or less nothing as they went their way through the deep purple countryside.

One of the walkers was none other than Serena, the Sweetly Singing Seamstress. Her companion was Farmer Brownthum, happy proprietor of the three remarkable cows.

"Which gate will we enter the Emerald City by?" asked the maiden, just to be saying something.

"Oh, undoubtedly the north gate," replied Brownthum. "In fact I think it's called the Gillikin Gate. Do you know your geography?" he added with a mischievous smile.

Serena just giggled. She could see it was time for another lesson.

"Can you tell me the names of the various parts of the kingdom of Oz? beginning with our own home region..."

"The answer to the question is: Gillikin, Quadling, Winkie, Munchkin, and of course the District of Oz," stated Serena with a smile. Then both she and the farmer burst into laughter. The talk was being all too mock-solemn and trite.

What the companions were laughing about was the recent

THE CROWN OF OZ

formal naming of one of the sections of the Land of Oz. This was another example of the poking of the nose of the irrepressible Miss Fattywiggins into the affairs of the fairyland. When she had first arrived she had been instructed as to the names of the four large constituent countries of Oz and their keynote colors. But then one morning, looking out of royal Ozma's bedroom window beyond the walls of the Emerald City to the green meadows stretching far away, she had said to her doting protector, "What's the name of this green country then?"

"Oh, it hasn't got a name," said the little queen, startled to consider for the first time that this was so. "I suppose people just say 'the Emerald country'."

"Oh, dear, that won't do," declared the visitor forthrightly. Ozma, amused, asked why not.

"Well, your other lands, like the Munchkin one, for instance, which is as blue as this one is green—it isn't called 'the Blue country'—not officially, anyway—as an actual name. Anyway 'Emerald' as the name of the capital city doesn't refer to a color but to a jewel. By that token Munchkinland might be known as 'the Sapphire country'. It doesn't fit."

"You give it a name then, Fatty," said the princess indulgently.

So Fattywiggins thought and thought. She tried to remember parallels from her own country but failed. You couldn't call it a 'county' or a 'duchy'. It wasn't governed by a count or duke but by a Queen. Then she happened to recall another great land where they almost spoke her own language, English. Its capital was like the Emerald City: a metropolis surrounded by a modest belt of real estate that didn't belong to any of the contiguous political divisions of the country.

"Let's call it a 'District'!" she proposed triumphantly.

"Go ahead," encouraged Ozma. "District of what?"

Fattyw was stumped. She had to do more thinking. "'District of Emeralds'? No, you might as well say 'Emerald Country' and be done with it." Nor did the girl feel quite justified in making up a nonsense name of her own, on the order of "Quadling" or "Winkie". Fancy going out among the denizens

of the green hinterland and announcing, 'You lot are now to be known as "Wudkings" — or "Quilchies".' It hardly bore thinking of. In despair Fattyw finally said "District of Oz", and so it became, by royal fiat.

Serena and Farmer Brownthum could laugh about it now. Word of the English-miss' coinage had been spread abroad quickly. "So in a way one *could* now say that 'all roads lead to "Oz"', " summed up Serena.

"Indeed you could," agreed the farmer, "if you had to."

C H A P T E R

S E V E N

Ozma of Oz was not a subscriber to the teachings of astrology as we shall see had become the case with O. Z. Diggs, Wizard of Oz. She had, however, her own mystical leanings in the form of an involuntary belief in signs, portents, and prophecies.

Just now she was having a presentiment that there were going to be disturbances during the period of the twenty-first-birthday celebration. She could not foresee what form the problems would take but she was not going to be surprised if they in some measure should be connected with Fattywiggins.

'Strange,' she mused, as the hours passed. She was not quite able to say why the young English girl exercised such a fascination for her. Was it her beauty? Although Fatty possessed the ballooniest thighs ever seen on a female mortal of that age, she at the same time had a face of nearly breathtaking sweetness (in repose) and lovely mahogany-colored hair that curled endearingly about her heart-shaped visage, à la Betty Boop of a later day.

But Ozma didn't want to admit that it was mere feminine prettiness in Fattywiggins that attracted her. She would have to search farther afield. She decided it must be Fatty's character

that drew her. She was sure there was not a mean bone in the girl's body. It was just that she was so impulsive! That was the word. Fattyw did and said at once whatever came into her head. Then she had plenty of time afterwards for regrets. But anyway she *had* the regrets. That always saved the day.

There was, however, no denying that the newcomer posed a challenge to the Girl Ruler's thus far successful reign. Up to now no one had been able for any length of time to threaten her authority over all the fairyland. Nobody felt constrained by Ozma's lightly exercised rule and all had accepted her as sovereign, even such diverse and at times perverse types as the immigrant trolls in the northern mountains and the belligerent Hammer-Heads in the south. Farther afield, the Nomes, whose domains tunneled toward those of Ozma from the direction of Ev on the continental coast, appeared to recognize her for the time being as rightful overlady of Oz.

Was the little queen now going to find her renommée undermined from within by her partiality for the newly-arrived mortal girl with all her whims and caprices? Sadly, Ozma instructed herself to be on her guard. Though she ruled Oz, and with an abundance of élan vital, she was still, in this, her tenth year on the throne, unsure of the extent to which she might rule in a human heart.

Ozma could not deny it. She needed friends. Who doesn't? Furthermore she needed friends who were her peers as to sex and age. It was very well to have devoted pals in the form of men of straw, tin-plate, copper, wood and pumpkins, but close to her heart was a niche for a close girl chum, or chums. She had dear Dorothy Gale but Dorothy had her own family to whom she was at least as devoted as she was to the little Oz regent. And when Dorothy, as now, was away for long periods of travel and togetherness with her aunt and uncle, Ozma could know loneliness.

It was a sweet windfall then, when the delightful dumpling known as Fattywiggins turned up in Oz. The girl queen was devoted to the sprightly newcomer. However, she was clearly

THE CROWN OF OZ

not going to put up with just *anything*. Would she be able in the end, by the example of her own good behavior, to win the willful madcap over to a course of more or less uninterrupted decorum?

Today now, at this audience, the younger girl was performing very badly. She had made loud remarks that seemed to question the bona fides of that curious bowl of punch the Wizard had sent in. She had almost grossly displayed, *via-à-via* the poor old Kapellmeister (the justice of whose position Ozma secretly acknowledged), a desire to score off rivals. Then, her gluttonishness and lack of regard for others in the matter of the gift of chocolates had been off-putting. ‘What next?’ thought the fairy with a sigh.

Suddenly a strange and untoward noise caught the girl ruler’s attention. Portents again! The fairies had once foretold that, if she did not continually mind every P and Q, animals, particularly domestic ones, might be the agents of Princess Ozma’s undoing.

She thought that, of all places, she ought to be safe in her own throne room. Yet she had to remember what a near thing there had been just last year, during that tiresome affair of the six-leafed clover. Then she had been forced to receive ruminants daily in the presence chamber and judge them on charges of having consumed, most often unwittingly, examples of the powerful hexing plant. She had come perilously near losing credibility in her fixed determination to enforce an essentially silly law. Still, she had weathered the passage.

After that she had issued a decree forbidding the presence of farm animals in or near the Palace of Magic, not to mention the very Inner Sanctum itself. Yet now Ozma distinctly heard the sound of moo-sique—and the old-fashioned kind at that.

C H A P T E R

E I G H T

Now the persiflage of the two Gillikin foot travelers was interrupted by an old woman who for some time they had been vaguely aware of as treading the road behind them. She caught up with the pair and without ado said, "Would you be so kind as to give me a taste of your cows' milk?"

Serena and farmer Brownthum looked at the crone curiously. She had spoken courteously enough, if without preamble, but there was something about her... Something of the look of a fairy, despite her age (for in Oz too fairies appear as ageless). The woman gave a toothy grin.

Without directly replying Serena took from her shoulder the two buckets used for milking and presented one for use as a stool. She said, "Have you walked far, dame?"

"Thank you, my dear," said the old woman as she received the other pail. My name is Mombi. Yes, I've traveled far from my home near the foot of the Gillikin Mountains."

The milking operation was carried out by the expert, Farmer Brownthum. He squatted on one pail, milked into the other. When he had taken about a cup's worth he returned the bucket to Mombi to drink from.

The old woman downed the liquid quickly. Then she indi-

THE CROWN OF OZ

cated that she wanted to try the product of a second cow. Wonderingly, the country couple watched as she went on to drink from yet the third.

"Mighty good milk your cows give," said the old woman at last, with a burp, as she wiped her chin on the back of a wrinkled hand. "Actually I prefer buttermilk; it's so nice and sour. But that's neither here nor there. Now because you've shown a stranger kindness you will find you won't need to milk your cows again until you arrive at the Emerald City. I take it you're going to the District of Oz."

"Yes, we are," admitted the singing seamstress. "Thank you for your good wishes," she went on, not being sure whether to take what old Mombi had said as just polite noises or the announcement of an actual sorcery spell.

"We've been giving away the milk along the road," put in the farmer, "in exchange for food and lodging. But now we're almost there."

Barter and the exchange of goods and services were the system in Oz. Since the time of the abdication of the Wizard Diggs as dictator of the Emerald City, money had not been used as a serious means of exchange, although for fun people would sometimes, when stocking up on provisions, go through the ritual of handing over ozlings and qualints.

Recently, however, a new element had in fact entered the charming picture of a moneyless society. Unwilling any longer to be dependent on the unpredictable (g)nomes for the supplying of precious stones and metals, Queen Ozma had turned instead to the immigrant Trolls, also capable miners but thitherto not heard of in Oz chronicles. But most un-Ozianly the trolls demanded cash for their services. This was going to raise problems in the immediate days to come, indeed was raising them already, had the travelers but known.

But now Mombi was pinching pretty Serena's cheek lightly and promising that her charm would work. "Better than any fairy wishes you might get," she boasted. "My charms don't disappear with the dawn."

So saying, the woman picked up the two baskets she had been carrying and made off spryly along the mauve brick road. Within minutes she was out of sight over the next hill.

"Hm," said farmer Brownthum. "Not an unlikable old woman. I thought there was something of a—mm, magic-worker about her."

"You don't mean 'witch', do you?" asked Serena, suddenly serious. "Because she made it clear she doesn't belong to the fairies."

"Oh, the witches are all gone," informed the older man, "ever since Miss Dorothy from Kansas disposed of the ones of the East and West."

"What about the witch of the South?" countered Serena. "She's a witch. Not to mention our own dear Good Witch of the North?"

"Oh, but they're not wizened and ugly," returned Brownthum. "That makes all the difference. Somehow, when they're beautiful or charming, the word 'witch' sounds kinda funny and you want to say 'sorceress'."

"Well, witch or not, let's hope Mombi's spell doesn't turn out to be an evil one," concluded Serena.

C H A P T E R

N I N E

Ozma left her throne and strode forthrightly toward her honor guard at the doors of the audience chamber.

“Do my ears deceive me or do I hear *cows* in the outer corridor?” she required to know.

Guardsmen Lapstart and Draxton scratched their heads or beards or whatever other hairy places were available and looked awfully pale. Well they knew the prohibition against cattle in or near the palace.

The two were dressed in the style of an earlier day.

Otherwise-new-broom Ozma, on coming to the throne, had *not* made changes in anything quaint and colorful such as the way her palace employees got themselves up. Now the two men drew attention to their costumes by nervously fingering lapels or epaulettes or frogging.

“Yes’m,” mumbled Lapstart, batting at a butterfly that had unaccountably landed on his nose, and looking cross-eyed, Draxton grew beet red and stuck out his tongue. Then he choked out the same reply, adding the honorific, “Your Majesty”!

The little exchange had given Miss Fattywiggins time to turn her attention from fairy Peaseblossom and run up to her protector at the doors to the antechamber. She was in time to hear

Ozma demand, "Do the cows have passes? Or whatever people may happen to be with them?"

The guardsmen swallowed and replied in the affirmative. How they knew, who never for a moment had left their places each side of the closed greened doors, was anybody's guess. A hint of the truth was probably contained in the strangled "— I guess" that Draxton added to his speech.

Ozma pondered, chin in hand. The matter of the possession of visitors' passes might be settled by a confrontation with the newcomers themselves. Graver for the moment was the issue of how two such idiots as these happened to be on guard duty (and "honor", at that) in her very own throne room. Crossing of eyes, sticking out of tongues, and coughing did not become such as were to be suffered to be in close attendance upon herself.

"Would you two men," spoke the ruler, "please meet me in the topiary garden at four this afternoon? I have new employment for both of you."

The men re-coughed, spluttered with nervousness, nodded their heads, and replied in the vernacular. "Four o'clock straight up and down, your highness," gasped the two in unison.

Now royal Ozma could give her attention to the trying Fattywiggins. She was a problem within the audience hall; the cows as yet were outside and could be hoped to be able to be dealt with later. The princess had seen the girl bend down and take up a green envelope that someone had pushed under the door of the anteroom. Then she had retreated to the neighborhood of the throne, where she was now quarreling loudly with Peaseblossom again.

"Get off the throne," the girl shouted. "You don't belong on Ozma's throne. You're just a fairy."

"Fairy, schmairy," replied Peaseblossom insouciantly. "So's Ozma a fairy. Are you going to try to keep all fairies off all thrones? Our Queen Lurline always lets us sit on her throne when she's not using it."

"That's only ordinary-fairy royalty—if that," raged the tiresome Fattywiggins. "May I ask your title!"