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!"

"You may not," said Peaseblossom, giving as good as she got.

"If you don't move I'll sit on you," threatened Fattyw, and so saying she made her word deed. Abruptly Peaseblossom vanished.

Most curiously, at the same moment the agonized mooing of the corridor-confined cattle stopped at a stroke. Everyone rejoiced in the silence. The crowd in the court room could now hear perfectly as the Princess spoke in a subdued tone, "Fatty, would you please leave as quickly as Peaseblossom and wait for me in the antechamber?"

Fattywiggins was speechless. Just for a moment, until she burst into tears. She had just been going to present to her sovereign with all ceremony and delight the mysterious envelope—and now this. Abruptly she stuffed the paper into her pocket and fled from the throne room. 'Oh!' she cursed to herself; she would *never* have been ordered out had it not been for that fairy!

C H A P T E R T E N

The train of cows and people began moving along the lilac brick road again. The backs of the placid cows were loaded with all the travelers' luggage. Besides the ordinary requirements of the road such curiosities as a sizable harp and an ice-cream churn were to be discerned.

"I wonder if we'll be able to find ice for the machine," said the farmer, "once we reach the city."

"I should think anything you can find elsewhere in Oz will also be available in the capital."

It began to look like more merely desultory chat was going to be the order of the day when ahead a tremendous whirring noise was heard and a lone rider on an old-fashioned unicycle came rushing down the road.

"Look out for the cow!" shouted farmer Brownthum but the cyclist made his way past the herd deftly without even slacking speed.

"I've never seen one of those before," remarked Serena.

That was the only bit of excitement until presently the group came to a spanking new roadsign stating "Now entering the District of Oz". The young Queen had lost no time in translating into realia her new favorite's choice of name for the green

country.

Thus reminded, Mr. Brownthum said, "'Do you have our passes for the audience ready?"

"Yes. I've put them away for safekeeping close to my heart," replied the girl comfortably.

Then in a few minutes they topped a rise and saw in the distance in all its glory the Emerald City. Its great towers, high as the sky, glistened in the sun all grandly green, in stark contrast to the intense purple they would now be leaving behind. And yet, somehow, not quite so intensely green as they had expected? Faintly lavendery, was it?

"Looks like we'll get there in time for the audience all right," opined the farmer. "Maybe even have time for a bite to eat beforehand."

"Yes, and to find some place to stay," rejoined his young woman companion. "It will be good to have a rest after three days on the road."

But mostly the two wayfarers just gazed in unaffected wonder at the magic city which neither of them had ever seen before but only heard about in dreams.

The journey of these two was a tiny part of a new policy implemented by the wise and interested young Girl Ruler of Oz as part of her campaign to open up her kingdom to general enlightenment. She now regularly sent out invitations to likely persons in outlying regions to come and pay a call on her in the form of attendance at one of the regular Wednesday audiences.

Serena had received her bid because she was the Sweetly Singing Seamstress and her renown had reached even as far as the court at the Emerald City. The news of her honor reached the Brownthum household when Serena was running up a frock for the farmer's wife.

"Why, land sakes!" exclaimed Mrs. B. "My Abner has got an invite to the very same things! 'Count of the cows', you know. Why, you two ought to travel together!" she cried, a thought of jealousy never crossing her nice mind. "It would be the most natural thing in the world."

That had decided it. The farmer and the needlewoman had always been pleasant nodding acquaintances and they ought to make perfectly amiable traveling companions. As for occasions for jealousy, Serena had an additional and compelling reason for going to town which quite precluded any need by the farmer's wife for anxiety at the thought of her husband and the pretty girl in close daily contact. Practical considerations too dictated the teamship: the broad back of a placid cow would be ideal for the transport of Serena's necessary and largish harp.

Farmer Brownthum, as he peered across the meadows and parks to the gleaming amethyst—I mean, emerald towers of the capital, recalled the little formal farewell breakfast that had inaugurated their enterprise. The older couple had gone to fetch the seamstress at her little house. There they sat down to a sumptuous repast.

The farmer remembered the menu fondly. Freshly crushed tomatoes had yielded a rich juice, afterwards flavored with red and rosé peppers. There were large squares of crisp toast buttered and heaped with diced mushrooms in a mild gravy. Coffee or alfalfa tea was served according to choice. Oh, and not to forget: hot muffins rich with Serena's own delicious preserves. The girl was bringing along as a little gift some jars of the latter.

The farmer's daydreams were rudely broken into by the abrupt arrival of further unicycles which appeared suddenly out of a little dell and bore down on them.

This phenomenon was all new to the bucolic travelers but represented an already established part of new-broom tactics in Oz. Fattywiggins again! The fat girl, seeing Oz laid out with bright new yellow roads crisscrossing everywhere, had said to potent Ozma, 'What a waste; slick-surfaced roads all over and nobody to ride on them. You don't have any horses in Oz and automobiles haven't been allowed in. Rut people don't need brick pavements just to walk on. What's the big idea?"

"Hm," said Ozma, vexed. "We thought of roads as opening up Oz; making all parts readily accessible to all others. But you're

right, I see now. For mere foot travel a network of paths and trails would have made more sense. Easier on the feet too. Any ideas?"

"Well, bicycles anyway," suggested Fattywiggins, her thoughts speeding back to the puncture before Margate that had begun the chain of events that landed her where she was now.[§] "I've always loved biking. what if you implemented your opening-up campaign by establishing a fleet of swift messenger-carrying bikes?"

That's what Brownthum and the seamstress were experiencing now. Ordinary communications in Oz were slow, even virtually non-existent. Letters took ages to arrive, most often being delivered by hand by travelers. Now the speedy unicycle brigade was changing all that, relaying messages all about the kingdom in a mere day or two.

Again the farmer quickly herded his charges to the side of the road. The speed demons swept past with shirt-tails flying. In the silence that followed there was heard a cry.

''Oh, look! There ahead!" spoke Serena.

Behold: poor old Mombi was sprawled in the middle of the road. The woman was calling out for someone to assist her in getting up. By some fluke both her baskets rested upright.

Serena ran swiftly down the road and helped the sufferer into a sitting position and so to her feet. She dusted her off and handed back to her the two baskets, all the while the crone muttered and moaned about the unicyclists and the speed at which they rode. But she ended at last by saying, "Once again I am in your debt," and she wiped away a few tears. "Is there anything I might do for you?"

"Not for me," replied the sprightly grisette. "Thank you just the same. But Mr. Brownthum is going to be needing some ice for the ice-cream maker."

"Ice," said Mombi, now more or less restored and speaking thoughtfully. "Tiresome stuff. It *will* go and melt on you. However..."

§ Again, see *Fattywiggins and the Caresso-Pigs in Oz*. Editor's note.

Farmer Brownthum had by now caught up with the others and he watched with interest as Mombi took one of Serena's pails and threw into it some crystals she produced from a pouch at her waist. The woman mumbled a few quick words and gave a wave of a gnarled hand. There stood a bucket of solid sparkling lavender-green ice.

"How's that?" said the old dame with pardonable pride. "And you'll find this ice won't melt. It can be used over and over again."

Serena just clapped her hands in delight. Even Farmer Brownthum had to grin broadly. This was magic you could see on the spot. No doubting the beldame's capacities now.

"Perhaps we should travel on together," suggested the farmer. 'We can make sure you don't get no more upsets—'til you get to the city gates or the palace or wherever you're going."

"Don't mind if we do," said the witch contentedly. It was her way of speaking graciously.

Upon the opening by the honor guard of the doors to the antechamber so that Fattywiggins could pass out, the cow contingent from way up north in Gillikinland made its entry. As the two parties passed each other Fattyw did a double take. She'd never seen a purple cow. She'd never hoped to see one. But now that she had she bitterly regretted that she was not going to be allowed to watch what happened next within the Presence Chamber.

Ozma had by now regained her composure and her throne. She sat down with a tiny gasp of relief and said, appearing most queenly (she would have appeared most princessly, but I don't think one can), "What have we here, my good man?" She was addressing dear old Farmer Brownthum, who had followed his animals into the great hall.

"I have brought, per commando, my three extraordinary cows, Your Majesty," replied the countryman. "And also myself," he added modestly. "Oh, and may I introduce my companion, Serena the Sweetly Singing Seamstress?"

Ozma put down her orb and sceptre, which she had natu-

rally taken up on reassuming the throne, and clapped her hands in seemly delight. "Of course! I sent for you. I recall now only too clearly. Now wasn't I silly to worry about cows in the palace when I had actually asked you to bring them!" Her chagrin was touching to behold. 'I must be more than twenty one,' she added, to herself. 'More like ninety and getting past it!'

The farm duo, whisking into use the two buckets, were already starting an ice cream production line right there in front of queen, God, and everybody. Farmer B. milked and when the milk had been dumped in to the ice cream churn Serena cranked vigorously. The agriculturist kept up a running commentary. "This is the first of my extraordinary cows," he explained. "Her name is Bossie. That's just a standard cow name. It's not because she's bossier than the rest." Briskly he moved his bucket stool along to cow number two. "And this one's Chippie; again, not at all because she's the least bit wanton."

For a moment there was a hold-up as they waited for Serena to be through turning Bossie's milk into ice cream. To fill the interval Brownthum asked that a cup be brought, or perhaps several. A beaker duly made its appearance and he dipped up a foaming portion of the product of the number two cow and presented it respectfully to the girl ruler.

"Now, Princess Ozma," he addressed his sovereign, "I want you—most graciously!—to taste this creamy milk... What do you think?"

Ozma gasped. "Goodness gracious," she murmured, impressed. "Why, it's all chocolatey!" And quickly she drained the mug.

"Aha," said the farmer with satisfaction.

As Ozma drank and Serena churned a curious little tableau meanwhile took place. The antechamber door could be seen by the observant to open a crack and a young girl slipped her hand through. The door had to gape considerably more widely for her whole body to pass into the audience hall. Then a moment later the handsome head of a third guardsman appeared round the edge of the door.

Abruptly his gaze was transferred from Fattywiggins, his legitimate quarry, to pretty Serena sweating at the churn, and he started. At almost the same instant the seamstress-churnstress noticed the newcomer. She blushed. The guardsman waved; the maiden waved back.

Queen Ozma, looking into her empty cup, had not yet taken account of the little passage. She was musing on: "All due praise to Chippie! It is just wonderful that so gifted a cow should exist." But then she raised her gaze and was in time to see the policeman-like hand of the third guardsman descend on the shoulder of the disgraced Miss Fattywiggins. With a view to encouraging the obvious intention of her henchman Ozma imperiously signed for them to quit the audience room. This they did.

Still milk-bemused the princess now left the royal chair again and moved to where Shamrock patiently awaited her turn at milking. She noticed the pattern of violet four-leafed clovers on the animal's hide. "What delightful flavor do you yield? I wonder," the girl graciously addressed the cow.

"Your Majesty shall try it for yourself!" cried Farmer Brownthum enthusiastically. "All in good time."

In good time Serena had completed the turning of Bossie's milk into fine, plain-flavored ice cream which she spooned into a row of cups and sent round for general sampling by the courtiers in the hall.

The farmer tipped half a pail each of the milk of the second and third cows into the churn and Serena was off again. Brownthum made conversation: "Shamrock also is generous with her milk. The milk is always cool too. None of that hot-from-the-body warmth that puts city-dwellers off. Yet all three flavors of milk taste equally good when warmed up artificially before bedtime..."

Ozma was musing once more. 'These seem like rather sweet old cows. Certainly nothing dangerous. Could it be that that prophecy about the fatalness of livestock was in error?' Indeed, it might have seemed a shame if these talented animals had not

been able to be presented to her.

The seamstress had sailed on to a photo finish at the churn. Triumphantly she dug a huge scoop of the newest ice cream from the churn bucket and filled Ozma's cup. She stepped before the girl ruler and offered the treat with a curtsey.

"Heavenly days!" the fairy princess was pleased to exclaim. "How wonderful!" She stared into the mug with its faintly lavender brown-flecked contents. "Mint chocolate ice cream!"

Hearing her praise, the crowd in the hall burst once more into resounding applause and lined up to have their beakers filled with the new taste sensation.

C H A P T E R T W E L V E

Just as the Munchkins had their Blue Gnu and the Winkies a Yellow Yak, there was also a heraldic animal for the land of the Gillikins and that was a Purple Pig. Nobody seemed to know the origin of these beasts. There was nothing very appropriate about them as symbolic creatures, no more so than that anyone out in the great world could tell at a glance why King Louis XII of France should be symbolized by a porcupine or Richard II of England by a White Hart. That was just the way it was and there they were.

Antiquarians studying the case had taken note of the fact that the Beasts of Oz were all monosyllabic in name. There was also the Red Bear and the Emerald Elk. Other than that there seemed to be no unifying principle behind the choice of 'favorite' animal. "Gnu" rhymed with "blue" and three of the names started with the same letter as the descriptive color-word associated with them. Beyond that, guidelines broke down.

When, some years later than our present story, the little upstart country of the Unnikegs got going, the bustling inhabitants, intent on having their own version of everything traditional in other parts of the magical land, knew no better counsel than to choose the Ox to be the Orange beast. This

did not reflect well on their virility but then such was never important in Oz anyway. Oh, one thing more: none of the heraldic animals was of a color found in them in nature.

That is to say; nature as we know it ex-Oz. Of course the pigs in Gillikinland were purple! Latterly they were purpler than ever. What is rather grizzly to relate (although what color of sliced and oozing flesh would not be grizzly, when you come to think of it?) : the pork chops were purple at the court of Prince Randy and the nobles of Pumperdink ate violet rashers for breakfast. Joe King of Upland and his queen Hyacinth were eating mauve ham sandwiches at the moment our chapter begins.

"Make it last, my dear," quoth King Joe. "This *is* the last."

"The heliotrope ham, you mean?" said Hyacinth, licking her fingers. Lavender lard tastes lovely and in fact its cholesterol count is rather low (not that they knew anything of, or could worry about, such concepts at the period of this tale).

"Yes," said the king. "The Foresters were with me yesterday end reported they'd delivered to the palace kitchens the last wild boar there's likely to be for many a day. They seem to be extinct!"

"In Oz?" said Hyacinth incredulously. "Why, nothing can become extinct in Oz! Everything lives forever."

"Yes, lives. But exists? Can you suppose that bacon 'exists' any longer after you've eaten and digested it?"

'"Well, I'll concede that it is then no longer very... 'like itself'. But what are you getting at, dear Joe?"

"Gillikin ham is a delicacy. Rather, *was*. It was so popular supply couldn't keep up with demand. Pigs are passing from the scene in Gillikinland. There's an absence of them. Butchers can't keep people in pork."

"Let them eat cake," said the queen unfeelingly.

Thereafter the conversation languished.

But the unfortunate state of affairs remained. While everything else in the northern land was getting more purple, Gillikin pork was getting less—in quantity, that is, not purplitude. Persons in authority felt that something was going to have to be

done if the heraldic beast of the kingdom was not to die out entirely, and breakfast plates become less appetizing.

Joe, King of the Uplanders, did not forget the problem following the indecisive luncheon with his queen. By and by he essayed to do something about it. Joe had no incantatory powers of his own and as he realized that there must be no less than magic to the fore in curing the present shortage he looked about him for assistance afield.

He thought of witches. They had featured a lot in news reports of recent years. It had been mostly good news—about bad witches; to wit, their annihilation. No use calling on destroyed witches, of course. For preference, one didn't want to employ a wicked witch at all, be she ever so powerful. That was why King Joe sent no message to the local witch, Mombi. She hadn't (yet) been outright destroyed but her reputation was not of the best and she lived, as far as he knew, a very withdrawn life in the foothills of the Gillikin Mountains.

What about good witches? Well, the northern land had had its own resident Good Witch for many years but she had some seasons ago suffered a water (though not directly sea-) change into something new and strange[§]; so strange, in fact, that it was not even known at the present moment whether she still existed.[£] No joy there.

There was one good witch more. This one had always possessed a great deal of dignity and authority and besides (and probably most important in the eyes of frail mortals) she was nice-looking, so she was one of the ones one tended to think of more as a "sorceress" than as a "witch". Indeed, if one were a high official in her fan club one got quite upset if the word "witch" was used. However, a later-day campaign to sanitize Oz and render it totally innocuous, sexless, and boring, failed and a witch Glinda well and truly remained.

It was to her that Joe King addressed his letter and plea and he sent it off by unicycle messenger. The Good Sorceress of the

§ See *Uncle Henry and Aunt Em in Oz*.
£ See *The Good Witch of Oz*. Editor's notes.

South read the application with interest. It recalled to her information of developments that she had of course been aware of, through daily perusal of the Great Book of Records.

Glinda put a (non-habit-forming) jalaneño dope-stick to her lips and leant back to ponder. Presently she jotted a couple of notes to herself, the practical results of which gradually became known to the world at large and especially in Gillikinland. The first of these was a reminder to invite some of Queen Lurline's fairy band, when now they would arrive en masse, as per custom, to attend Princess Ozma's birthday festivities, to take up temporary residence in the north of Oz, just to keep an eye on things. It would be helpful as well to be able to call on the fairies in any emergency in the matter of the resurgence of the Purpleys, with which phenomenon Glinda was au courant long before word of it was to reach the less worldly Girl Ruler, Ozma.

Some years previously the latter wise and kind little potentate had declared an open-door policy as regarded world faerie. With the coming of such developments as the telephone, radio and airplanes, belief in the great world in the existence of wee-folk had plummeted. This had resulted in fairy pogroms worldwide. National governments decided that people would be better able to hold to non-belief in elves, brownies, trolls, and the like if they never saw any. The upshot was edicts expelling native fairy populations from many countries.

When Ozma learned of this§ she at once promulgated a law declaring that all exiled fairy folk were welcome in Oz. The resultant invasion was terrific.

Sprites and goblins arrived by the million. Luckily many of them were tiny; as with angels, large numbers of them could dance on the head of a pin. Hence fairy overpopulation did not become a grave problem. But somewhat of a problem it did become, so much so that royal Ozma felt constrained to ask some of the rulers of outlying countries on the Oz continent to house contingents of the newcomers.

Thus it was that the celebrated fairy band of the High Queen

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

Lurline had increased in numbers from thirty-one to two thousand! And the Forest of Burzee was quite spilling over with them.

There were plenty to spare to go live in Gillikinland and help out with one thing and another, including measures to be taken toward ending the diminution of the pig population.

C H A P T E R T H I R T E E N

No sooner had the cows, together with all the paraphernalia of milking and ice cream making, been removed from the audience hall than Serena's harp was set up and positioned close to where royal Ozma reseated herself. Now the sweetly singing seamstress stepped to the instrument to demonstrate why she had been invited to court. She played most sweetly upon her harp and all the sweeter for the sight she had gained of a handsome head stuck in at the anteroom door.

First on the programme was a ditty about eternal love that blossoms in a day but can last an entire lifetime. As a matter of fact the piece was revived many years later and was featured in the film of *Hello, Dolly* where it was sang as "It aownly takes a maowment to be loved a whaowle life long".

Next Serena sang of the night and of the special spell woven by that time of day for those who are not sleeping. It was called *Lullaby for Insomniacs* and had a very monotonous rhythm that caught perfectly the tempo of sheep jumping over a pasture gate. Ozma and one or two others found themselves nodding but woke up when the songstress stopped and they applauded vehemently.

Of course there was nothing for it but that the Sweetly Sing-

ing Seamstress should oblige with an encore. For it she chose a song about Ozma's birthday and how through the years the lovely fairy would always retain her beauty and at the age of a hundred (if she should ever allow herself to be more than twenty-one) she would still look much the same. The paean went by the catchy title of *Age is Mostly a State of Mind in Oz*.

Ozma was clapping with the others when the doors from the antechamber parted again and the attractive guardsman led in a wizened little old woman, heavily veiled.

The girl ruler was promising herself that this was going to be absolutely the last person she would receive at this audience, which she had allowed to run on for entirely too long a time. Suddenly she gave a gasp and leant forward impetuously.

A cold feeling passed over the princess. Her mind flew back ten years. Surely—but oh, no, it couldn't be—and yet, surely, was it not the aged and wicked Mombi who was approaching her? How dared she have the insolence to present herself here?

"Who is this? Why have you brought her here?" the disconcerted Queen demanded of the guardsman.

"Your Majesty, I found this old woman wandering in the topiary garden. She seemed to be looking for something. When I confronted her she said she had a pass or invitation from you to appear before you here today. She was only waiting for the entertainment to be over before carrying out her intention."

Now the old woman herself spoke, saying, "Indeed, Your Highness, such is the case." Here she flourished an emerald-colored card. But the voice! There is no describing its witchery. Rich and resonant, its honeyed tones amazed all who heard it. It was no wonder that the palace guardsman had been charmed and at once conned into showing the woman into the presence chamber. Now all the courtiers there attendant followed suit and fell under the spell.

Great Ozma did the same. This was no Mombi, whose quarrelsome whining voice the little princess remembered but too well. And yet... the figure was precisely the same. If only she could see her face. Besides its being confusing, the ruler was not

quite sure but what appearing at a royal reception veiled was not lése majesté. It was like coming in with your hat on.

"May we not see your face?" she asked the visitor.

"Ah, alas, Your Serenity," smurved the witch. "My veil is to shield your eyes. A disfigurement too terrible..." she lied glibly. Anyway she did not complete what would have been a totally false statement.

Well, nobody wanted to have to gaze upon the face of an elephant- or rat-woman on the eve of her birthday, so Ozma let it pass. "What business brings you here?" she enquired.

"Why, I have come to bring you these eggs," said the crone, and here she uncovered one of her baskets. Ozma looked at the curiously large purple eggs.

"Those wouldn't be hens' eggs, would they?" said the ruler doubtfully.

"Hens of different species, if you'll pardon me," replied the dame. "Peahens, turkey hens, and the like. I reared the birds myself. But that's beside the point, which is that through my powers as a seeress I divine that these eggs will be of help to you in the crisis that is coming."

Ozma's heart sank. She too had her modicum of second sight, at least enough to know that her subject was not talking through her hat. Perhaps this was the explanation of the qualms she had felt at odd moments all through the morning. "'Crisis'?" she repeated faintly.

"Yes, indeed, I'm sorry to say. Has word not reached you earlier, Your Grace?"

"Of what?"

"Why, the resurgence of the Purpleys! I thought everyone knew. It's been going on for some time."

There is a moment which is the first at which word of a great disaster reaches one. Sometimes that moment remains unforgettable. Speaking now from a later time, we can remind that everyone§ remembers exactly where he was and what he was

§ At least, every American over a certain age. See *The World on November 22nd*. Editor's note.

doing at the moment when he heard of the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Such a moment now was that at which Princess Ozma of Oz heard from her foster mother (though she was not to be aware of this circumstance at the time) of the "Purpleys plague". She never forgot the scene at the end of that interminable public audience.

"No," she breathed. "Please tell us."

The knowledgeable witch obliged. At the end of her presentation she called on her erstwhile companion of the road, fair Serena, whom she had observed still lingering among the spectators at the reception.

"Is it not so?" she asked for confirmation. "Is not everything in our country of the Gillikins much purpler than has ever been seen before? And is not that same purplitude spreading?"

Serena pressed her lavender hand to her purple locks and consulted her memory for an instant. She was able to confirm the implication. "I'm sure you're right. I hadn't thought about it all that much but certainly all is as purple as purple can be at home. I remember too being startled at how green the District of Oz looked in contrast, and yet somehow not *quite* so different as I think I'd expected. A bit more mauvey."

"And will get mauvier," predicted Mombi (I hope not with a malicious leer).

"What do you mean?" demanded Ozma, alarmed.

"As I say, the problem is the most serious along the frontier with Winkieland but eventually it will gravely affect the Emerald City as well. The purplitude is spreading. Your Augustness would do well to take measures. I believe these eggs will be of assistance.'"

Provokingly the woman did not say how but with a deep genuflection backed out of the throne room. Ozma remained looking thoughtfully after her.

C H A P T E R F O U R T E E N

Queen Lurline herself traveled to Gillikinland to see members of her band settled in.

The region assigned for their residence was a hitherto underpopulated one between the Backwoods and Nightingarden. It was chiefly distinguished by its abundant grape harvests and in the event it may have been an unlucky choice. Fairies by nature are enthusiastic and ebullient spirits and the prospect of the upcoming festivities in connection with princess Ozma's birthday was rendering the sprites scarcely able to contain their euphoria. If the fairies were not tipsy already they gave a good imitation of it. A small group, close to royal Lurline herself, were behaving in the following way:

They lolled among the grape vines and talked of what treats they expected to enjoy when presently they would all make their way to the Emerald City. Being ladies they were naturally much exercised about their appearance. Queen Lurline initiated the discussion by letting fall this remark: "My hair is ravishingly golden but I wonder if it would not be improved by putting some lavender rinse in it."

"My Queen," replied Titania, "you would spoil all your hair's natural loveliness. You do appreciate that yellow blended with

purple produces merely a muddy brown. Such would be too ordinary a hair tint for one so exceptional."

"Well, it was just an idea I had." Then presently the queen resumed, "At least I haven't gone to the extreme that some of you have and put my hair up in blocks."

This was a reference to certain fays' determination to keep abreast of human fashions of the period, when all hair must be crimped in order to rate consideration as being in style. Even now a dozen of the sprites were perched on vine poles and leaf tendrils, enduring the discomfort of the encasement of their locks in tiny vise-like wooden blocks.

"I don't know how you girls can stand it," Titania seconded the queen.

"It's actually quite painless," hiccuped Cobweb. Her coiffure was usually distinguished by an entanglement of webs and tiny spiders but she had washed those out in the interest of up-to-date trendiness. "I never worry about it at all," she pursued. Then she took another sip from a foxglove cup at her side.

"What suffering for beauty," commented the fairy leader, unconvinced by Cobweb's disclaimer. "But if the results justify the means..." She let her thought die away unresolved.

"I've just had a wine shampoo," announced Mab. "The claret seems to have inebriated me slightly right through the scalp. What an odd effect."

Moth for her part said, "I achieved the same result by using champagne as hair spray. Quite frankly, I like it. It is so much more genteel than grossly *drink*ing the beverage."

It became evident that some of the immortals, on taking up residence in this oinological neighborhood, had not been content merely to sip at the ripe fruit itself but had also had recourse to the distilled and fermented products of earlier years' harvests which were stored in abundance its caves and cellars in the vicinity.

As we have seen, fairies can be of any size from microscopic up to that of fully grown humans. Rarely do they grow beyond the latter limit. It is hard to picture fairies as big as whales.

For most purposes they preferred the smaller range of sizes. Provisions simply went that much further when one was tiny. In the fairyland of grapevines it was the greatest fun to hover on gossamer wings, stick a sharp-ended grass straw into a ripe muscadine, and drink the juice direct. Most of the dainty sprites preferred that form of enjoyment of the grapes over imbibing aged fluids found in musty barns.

C H A P T E R F I F T E E N

The Ugliest Troll lived under the cliffs that barred the Soup Sea from the land. There, in a cave carpeted with silver slime, he lay in a pool of many-colored seaweeds and snoozed among the pearly volumes of many great and learned books.

One stormy night a little fish was pulled up by the strength of a wave and thrust through the air by the wind into the dreaded lair of the ugliest troll. The fish landed on his side, slapping the surface of the pool is which the troll lay asleep, hitherto undisturbed by the echoes created by the tempest's voice. The ugliest troll awakened with a start, for the little fish had made the quietest noise in the cave.

The troll lifted his huge fin-hands out of the pool and brought them together in a prayer-like fan. Raising his nose from the water in order to smell what time it was, he discovered the little fish floating on the surface of the pool between volumes of Indian poetry and Buddhist logic. The books were finished in the best skins that the sea could supply.

"How did this little fish get into my grotto?" the disturbed troll said to himself. "Does the wind dare to mock me with offers of unacceptable food?"

You see, this troll, in contradistinction to the burden of

legends oft repeated, did not eat his fellow creatures. Instead, he was a vegetarian and ate only of the seaweed that filled the pool in which he slept and round which he housed his enormous library. True, the volumes were bound in the skins of creatures of the sea, but the troll thought this a humane way of immortalizing those carefully selected, so he supposed, by the sea because of merit and delivered to him by the wind which received them from the sea through the medium of flying spray and whirling foam.

Pensively the ugliest troll smacked the water in order to awaken the intruder. "Wake up, wake up, wake up, little fish!" Notwithstanding his many-volumed library and years of hard study, the troll could sometimes seem remote from reality and unaware of prime causes. The little fish did not move but lay as if in death upon the water/soup.

"Wake up, wake up, lazy little fish," reiterated the troll. His voice was louder than the sound of the tide that sloshed against the walls of his home. Once again he slapped the soup and presently the body of the fish drifted towards a small whirlpool into which the troll had the habit of throwing away the barnacles that attached themselves to his body when he was slumbering.

Slowly the body of the little fish started to turn in the eddy. "Oh, the little fish is probably dead," said the troll, temporarily forgetting that he was in Oz where dying is not as easily done as said. "Let him go with the barnacles."

But just as the troll started to resettle himself for sleep on and under the surface of the pool he saw the fish's body turning faster and faster in the rapid current. He happened to remember a promise he had made to his mother always to try to find beauty in the smallest and most insignificant of things. With a sudden gesture the ugliest troll scooped up the little fish from the soup's clutches and saved it from becoming chowder.

The troll brought it to his gigantic blubbery ear. "He's still alive?" he said, listening to the tiny heartbeat. Putting on his seashell glasses, he looked with care at the minute form which lay inert among the ridges of his palm.

Though so small it was the most beautiful fish that the ugliest troll had ever seen. It had a jeweled jasmine body and translucent apricot fins. Each black eyelid glistened like an onyx.

"What a treasure I have found," exclaimed the troll. "I shall put it inside the most beautiful shell there is in the entire sea."

He thereupon called to the deeps, which heard the troll on the voice of the wind. And the sea searched its depths for a shell fitting for the little fish and delivered it to the troll in a burst of froth and foam.

Taking the lidded shell and rinsing it in a fountain of clear amethyst water which flowed through a crack in the cavern wall, the ugliest troll gently laid the body of the little fish within. Then he commanded the wind to sing softly and so rouse the fish to wakening.

The wind sang of the breezes that stir the flowers and trees and carry the new seeds to the earth's bosom where they grow anew.

Behold, the limp body of the little fish began to stir and shortly the fish was moving gently around inside the big shell. The fish did not notice the ugly troll who was peering in at him absorbedly. Finally when he did look up he was not startled, for all he saw was the lovely reflection of himself is the mirror-like mother-of-pearl lining of the upper shell.

The ugliest troll gazed at the little fish and said, "Little fish, you are the most beautiful fish in the whole world." Now the little fish *was* startled, but when he looked up he could see nothing out in the gloom beyond the self-contained glow of the shell's nacre. All he could see was, verily, the most beautiful fish he had ever seen, brilliant in the gleam of the mother-of-pearl. This beautiful fish seemed to have the gruffest voice!

"Big fish, big fish, you are the most beautiful fish I have ever seen," said the little fish to his supposed brother. "I love you, big fish," concluded the smaller one.

At first, the troll was speechless. The words touched him inside. At last he got out: "I love you too, little fish."

The little fish then swished his tail and flopped about inside

the shell, the big reflected fish seeming to imitate his actions.

The ugliest troll smiled for the first time. He appeared beautiful, as great salty tears rats down the furrows in his face and fogged his seashell glasses.

"This is the first time anybody has ever told me that," he said to the little fish.

"How strange," said the little fish, "for you are surely the most beautiful fish that has ever been."

C H A P T E R S I X T E E N

Fattywiggins, still fumingly angry at the poor little fairy Peaseblossom, was kicking her heels in the anteroom to the presence chamber. People kept passing through in both directions but paying sorely little attention to her. She stalked about, munching an apple, and presently took up a position at the only window in the room. From there she looked down curiously to see the aged crone whom she had just noticed coming from the audience hall move about in the topiary garden as if in search of something.

Odd. What could she be looking for?

The garden was a cunningly wrought little enclave close under the palace wall and filling all of a courtyard. There a clever assistant of old Lucion, the head gardener, had given his fantasy free rein and, with consummate craftsmanship, clipped box shrubbery and yew trees into eight-foot-high figures of palace favorites: the Scarecrow, Nick Chopper, the Courageous Lion.

Fattywiggins watched as Mombi did something obscure at the foot of a green sculptured representation of the celebrated Dorothy Gale.

"Dorothy" sniffed Fattyw contemptuously. Ozma had frankly told the new favorite that missing Dorothy was the

occasion for her taking unto herself a new protegée at the Palace of Magic. The Kansas girl and her aunt and uncle had borrowed Ozma's red wagon and the swift Sawhorse to make another of their periodic far-flung peregrinations of discovery about the land of Oz. They had been gone for many weeks. Fattywiggins didn't like to think about what would happen when they—that is, *she* returned.

The door to the outer hallway opened again. Fattyw turned idly to look. That good-looking guardsman. What was he wanting? The girl had to smile as she saw the fellow squat and look through the keyhole into the throne room. He quite ignored the room's other occupant. "When is she coming out?" she heard him mutter impatiently.

"What's up?" said F.W., breaking the spell.

Guardsman Langley started and stood up. "My sweetheart's in there. Serena the Sweetly Singing Seamstress. We haven't met in months and now it looks like she'll never get away from Her Highness who, I can see, is still talking to her nineteen to the dozen."

Fatty drew near, still holding in one hand the purloined letter, whose corner she had been using to pick her teeth after the consumption of the apple. A s she too stooped to have a look Langley caught sight of. the green letter and stared.

When Fattywiggins withdrew her eye from the hole, no wiser than before, she grasped the direction of the guardsman's glance and at once said, "Langley, did you see anyone place this letter under the door while you've been on duty?"

"No, miss." The man looked a bit solemn and Fattyw wondered whether that was all he might have been able to say on the subject.

He did continue speaking a little. He asked politely if the young lady wished him to take the billet and deliver it to their sovereign. He had a pretty-shrewd idea that whoever had slipped the envelope under the door toad not intended it for the young English girl.

"Thanks," said Fats, "but I choose to give it to her myself."

C H A P T E R S E V E N T E E N

It was not only fairies who of recent years bad come in great numbers to Oz. Less immediately likable populations such as gnomes, kobolds, and trolls had also taken advantage of the general welcome to settle in the magical country. These were fay-folk thitherto virtually unknown there: trolls and kobolds absolutely and (g)nomes only so occasional intruders from more benighted regions beyond the encircling deserts.

Now all that was changed and the mischief-making goblins were disturbing the peace in a number of places. The trolls in particular gave cause for concern. For one thing, they were prolific. Localities that had formerly been troll-free now found the pests to be teeming. They liked to congregate in shanty towns that did nothing to embellish the landscape.

One such had sprung up near the wine-growing area that Fairy Lurline had chosen to queen it in. Naturally as soon as the trolls discovered that the outbuildings and cellars of the region contained inebriants there was no restraining them. This circumstance was now to play a part in a scene to be enacted.

As Lurline and her immediate circle perched among the vines discussing their hair-dos they were shaken by the sudden sound

and then sight of a gang of desperadoes.

"Move along," shouted a troll voice.

"Hurry up!" commanded another.

The voices grew louder and more painfully comprehensible. Something; about the tone and timbre warned the fairies to make themselves scarce. Their curiosity was of course too greatly aroused for them incontinently to make tracks. Instead they simply and quickly became invisible.

Now the fairies, agog, spied a party of five coming along the vine rows. Two of the number were bound and gagged, so how they managed to walk along on all fours was quite mysterious. Truth to tell, they weren't managing it very well, hence the exhortations from their captors. Awkwardly they blundered along an aisle of the grape yard

As the captives appeared to toe the line a little better the lead troll, one Numskul (Numskul P. Heddingtrousen, to give him his complete name), allowed himself to relax and even commented genially, "Won't it be wonderful to have bacon and eggs for breakfast again? Or think of ham-hocks and fritters for lunch!"

"Indeed," seconded a lieutenant. "This dearth of pork has been quite frightful."

"Why," exclaimed the third, "my wife might make us some pickled pigs' feet or pigs' knuckles." Roughly he jostled the two swine prisoners into line along the narrow path.

Numskul stopped drooling long enough to say, "Look at what we have here! Two luscious piggywigs. True, the smaller one won't serve for more at present than roast suckling-pig but we'll soon have her franked up to fatting for her pains. The other is already of a size to provide us meat for split-pea soup for a long time to come."

Hearing the grim words, the smaller of the two pigs fell down in a faint. Her sibling tripped over a vine root and joined her.

For lo! These were Caresso-Pigs, Wee and Nilnul (whose name was confusingly like that of his captor). All fans of Miss Fattywiggins will have marveled that thus far in our tale no

mention had been made of her inseparable favorites, the Caressos. This is due to the physical circumstance that when wise Queen Ozma got word of the near-extinction of the race of swine in her northern realm she requested and received leave of Miss F. to send the family of her chums there as colonists. Ozma had of course intended the pigs as heraldic beasts only. It was the Trolls who had jumped to wrong conclusions and when they ran across a couple of the Caressos out on a walking tour assumed they had been placed there as provender.

Now troll Numskul, noting the fall of the pigs, said, "We've been walking for quite a while now. I wonder if we'll make it home before nightfall."

"I too am pretty tired of walking," seconded his second. His name was Druid.

"Look!" cried Cheep, the third. "There's a barn just ahead. What if we stayed there for the night and went on with our prizes early in the morning?"

"That sounds good," concurred Numskul. He kicked Wee to her feet and urged Nilnul along at a faster pace.

The group passed on out of ear-range of the eavesdropping fairies, who, now that the coast was clear, turned on their fairy lights and glowed faintly in the gathering dusk. "Gosh," said Mustardseed, "weren't those trolls just the most ugly gnarled creatures you have ever seen!"

"It's easy to see what they've been up to," countered Mab indignantly. "They've abducted two of the new colonists the Oz ruler sent here to replenish the pig population of Gillikinland."

"Do you mean Princess Ozma?"

"That's the one."

"'Tis very grievous to be thought upon," declared Cobweb and forthwith quit thinking about it.

The consciences of the other fays were not so easily stilled. "Don't they know," cried Titania, outraged to a quivering pitch, "that any animal who can talk is a protected species in Oz?" Since all animals can talk in Oz, the scope was broad. "Such," went on the fairy, "are deemed out of bounds to anyone who

might ordinarily eat him or her."

Try telling that to jolly Joe King, Titania. He'd eat you (if you were a pig) quicker than you could recite the Declaration of Independence.

"It's clear to me," said Moth, "that the trolls, once they get these pigs back to their camp, plan to kill them both and devour them."

"Well, 'kill'," put in Mab. "That's rather going some, isn't it? since no one can die in Oz."

"Devour them anyway," insisted Moth.

At this point Lurline decided to act, or at least get someone else to act. "Moth," she spoke, "would you please spread the word and organize a band of our members to keep watch on the trolls and their prisoners tonight and subsequently to follow them in the morning back to their shanty town or wherever they're going?"

"Well thought upon, your majesty," praised Moth. "It shall be done, and right willingly."

Saying this, the fairy took off. in an instant. Her aura could be seen as a soft firefly glow as she flitted here and there, gathering up outlying fairies. Soon they had formed a bright circle of lights that flickered and then was seen no more as they pursued the renegade trolls and their hapless captives.

Meanwhile the trolls had reached the aforementioned barn beyond the end of the vineyard rows. Numskul issued commands. "You two take our friends inside the barn. Keep careful guard over them. Above all, do not hear them plead, for they're well-spoken and perhaps may more your hearts to pity if you mark them."

"I warrant you, my chief," said Druid. "Talkers are no good to us—except to eat."

"Start a small fire. I'll snatch us some food from the vines." Numskul turned on his heel.

The other two trolls went into the storehouse, where they unceremoniously threw down their prisoners next to a towering row of casks that lined one wall. It was not long before they

had a fire going in an old brazier they found on the premises. Amidst the plenty about them they used a flagon of fine old cognac to encourage the flames.

Alas, this was not the only use they made of such flagons. When their captain returned he found he had been a numbskull indeed to delegate authority to such confederates. The two were lifting high cheering cups and toasting one another as they looked for something to use as a spit to toast one of their captives.

"You cretins," the boss defined them, slinging down a partly fractured and abandoned witty basket he had found and filled with luscious grapes. "Don't you know better than to drink on empty stomachs?"

"We were powerfully thirsty," complained Druid.

"Fill up your bellies with these," ordered the chief brusquely, indicating the grape clusters.

"I'd rather start on those." Here Druid gestured significantly at the two cowering pigs.

Cheep was more realistic and said, "They'd better eat—if they're not to be eaten. Have we got anything to feed them?"

"There's no corn or swill, if that's what you mean," someone replied, but the topic soon palled as a source of interest.

When the trolls had eaten their fill of grapes their leader allowed them to start on grapes in another form and soon many a bottle was empty. One by one the kidnappers fell asleep by the fire, and pig Wee, empty stomached and ignored, followed suit. Her brother Nilnul watched as the last embers burned out, then he too strove with troubled thoughts to take a nap.

C H A P T E R E I G H T E E N

As the two chemistasters, the wizard Diggs and his assistant Xavier Jaxon, descended the 708 steps of the Wizard's tower in the Palace of Magic, the older man reverted to a favorite topic. "My new method of determining horoscopes is going to revolutionize the way one goes about casting them," he vouchsafed.

"Oh really?" replied Xavier, who knew nothing about astrology and cared less.

"Yes," enthused the Wizard. "It's another of my improvements on existing systems," he stated. "It seemed to me that we might just flatly do away with a lot of the traditional charting if we simply thought circularly. The circle *is* the perfect shape," the wise man went on, "nature's favorite," he concluded, making the same wrong assumption as Aristotle and Ptolemy.

"Please explain, professor," said Xavier politely.

"If we arrange the twelve houses of the horoscope on the circumference of a 'circle," said the good old man, "like so—" He gestured widely in the air in so vivid a manner that Xavier Jaxon could *see* the circles and indeed was going round in them, as they went down the spiral staircase. "—why, then we could place each of the twelve houses equidistantly on the perimeter," concluded the Wizard triumphantly.

"So you said," admitted Jaxon. "In other words, one equals one: an equation that has never been known to fail."

"I am delighted to see that you follow my reasoning so exactly," praised Diggs.

"But tell me," pursued Jaxon, "do you here in Oz still believe in that nonsense?" His question rather curdled the spell a little.

Wizard Diggs had the patience of the true believer in the face of the infidel. He said, "The horoscope goes back hundreds of years, if not thousands. Though some people may not be willing to go to the length of swearing by the stars, there does seem to be a certain amount of validity to the teaching of the influence of the heavenly bodies. After all, the stars have been there so long! They surely would have to have *some* effect after a while. And don't forget those famous 'star-crossed' lovers, Romeo and Juliet."

Xavier Jaxon considered the celebrated pair for a moment but did not come to any clear conclusion, at least as bearing in any way upon the present conversation.

The Wizard was going on. "...and so Ozma has asked me to cast her horoscope in such a way as to look into her love life."

Xavier missed his footing and fell down a few steps. It was, indeed, as if worlds were colliding. Ozma? Love life? Even he, as a raw newcomer, knew that the two concepts were as good as irreconcilable. He didn't dare ask Diggs what in heaven's name he meant.

The savant was continuing blandly as if he had never dropped a conversational blockbuster. "If we place a wheel cut out of a circle in the center—"

"Circle of what? Center of what?" pleaded Xavier, trying to keep up.

But the Wizard was well away on his hobby horse and impervious to jibes. "...a place for each of the signs on the circumference of the wheel," he was going on, making sure that there should be no misapprehensions on *that* score, "then we place a fastener through the middle of the two—"

'Two what?' thought the assistant but again failed to vocalize the doubt.

"—and we shall be able to spin the wheel, placing the sign in whatever house we should, according to the birth date. There, isn't that easy enough?" concluded Diggs, calmly confident.

Xavier J. was still making his way through the moods and tenses of the various previous utterances and did not reply at once. The Wizard didn't care and pursued. "Of course information regarding the signs and houses can then be placed [he loved that verb] inside and outside the circle." What a pity it were if it was not exactly understood where the houses were located. "That is, standard information regarding the quality of the stars, signs, et cetera,

"What time is it?" he suddenly asked. Apparently he had finished his out-loud thinking about his philosophy of the horoscope.

His assistant, who had fallen behind both in pace and in train of thought, muttered some reply. He was thinking, perhaps a little non-sequiturially, how close he and his mentor had become in the short time since his own arrival in Oz. It must be the Wizard's clever way of viewing things that made Xavier like him so much. Or could it be the challenge it so frequently seemed, to make out just what it was that O.Z. Diggs was on about?

The Wizard, the while, was reflecting on the wise thoughtfulness of the younger man in the face of his own cerebrations. Jaxon showed real astuteness in grasping the metaphysical aspects of any project he, Diggs, undertook. Not for him the waywardness of Fattywiggins, that other newcomer, who wanted to change everything in Oz to suit herself.

Diggs had, after all, to smile when he thought of the young girl whose charm had to compete with her ignorance and brashness. He glanced at his hand which carried the ingredients for what he thought of as a "small fun experiment" he would presently offer for the twelve-year-old's contemplation. The savant was holding regular science lessons for the youngster's benefit, for Fatty wasn't dumb, just impulsive.

By now the two men were before the doors of the antechamber to the Throne Room of the Girl Ruler. A small but expectant group of palace hangers-on were murmuring with excitement there.

C H A P T E R N I N E T E E N

The sea, which had been listening at the entrance to the grotto, roared with a great guffaw and the wind whistled at the foolishness of the little fish and the ugliest troll. The wind gossiped around the world to his brother winds, who in turn told all the little birds that the ugliest troll was in love with a little fish who thought the troll was a beautiful big fish. What capital confusion and mirth-making misunderstanding.

Soon the glades and meadows were rustling with the news of the ugliest troll and the little fish. They whispered to the insects, "How silly the little fish is! Why would such a beautiful big fish have such a very gruff voice?" they said.

And the insects hummed back, "How stupid the ugliest troll is, for all his knowledge and book learning. It's elementary physics. Can't he see that the little fish sees only his own magnified reflection?"

The flowers and the bees merely sneered to think that a troll and a fish could ever fall in love, even if by accident. "What can the world be coming to if a fish and a troll are lovers?" they asked.

The days passed and the ugly troll and the little fish lived together in paradise. The ugliest troll took to reading to the little

fish from his great volumes. His gruff voice began to sound half again as sweet as a siren's as he read out tales from The Arabian Nights, Greek myths, and the plays of Shakespeare and Rostand. They talked about all the deepest philosophical subjects, such as whether matter exists and who created the first god. They shared the arts. They divided all knowledge between them, and the understanding and friendship they knew were the greatest that could ever be achieved between two creatures of the deep barbaric sea and the wild sad shore .

The little fish told the troll of the experiences he had had in the kingdom of the deep. He claimed, although he was very young, to have served in the Legion of the Sea and fought in the Battle of Shroud Shale in which three thousand fish had engaged, to protect a school of minnows from an army of sharks. He showed the troll a scar on his fin to prove it. The little fish also boasted of having fallen in love with the prettiest she-fish on the Grand Banks, one who had won many prizes for her beauty.

"I'll bet you too must have been chased after by many a pretty fish," said the little swimmer.

"No," said the troll.

'That's very strange,' thought the little fish, but he did not think of expressing his thought to the big fish lest he hurt his feelings.

Presently the wind and the sea got into a heated argument concerning the ugly troll and the little fish.

"It's downright disgraceful for a creature of the sea like the little fish to live with the ugliest troll, who never thinks of swimming in my soup," said the Soup Sea.

"I on the other hand think it's perfectly delightful," said the wind. "You're just jealous because the ugliest troll uses my air and not your liquid."

"You have some nerve!" roared the sea.

Before long a storm was boiling. The sea frothed and the wind hissed. The tempest raged for days, incidentally tossing ships upon the rocks and washing billows over the dikes to flood fields and destroy crops. it was the worst argument the sea and

the wind had ever had.

The ugliest troll, secure in his happiness, was indifferent to all the noise of the elements. He threw up his hand-fins in abandon and said, "The wind and sea are probably quarreling over something perfectly trivial." With that remark he slid down comfortably in his lagoon and plumped up the billows behind his head.

"Good night, little fish," he said to his companion from the depths of his seaweed mattress.

"Good night!" replied the fish and added saucily, "Don't let the barnacles bite."

But the little fish could not fall asleep.

He tossed and turned all night, only to realize far on in the wee hours that it was the sea and the wind that were tossing and turning him as the recoil from their tempestuous dispute ruffled even the surface of the normally quiet lagoon.

In lulls in the storm he could still hear the familiar rambles and snores of his friend, the big fish, who slept on undismayed, half in, half out of the soup. The little fish's own home shell rocked back and forth.

Finally at about five o'clock the storm climaxed. A last and most enormous wave broke through to wash into the cavern and overturn the iridescent mollusk shell where the little fish sought to vain to catch forty winks. With a splash he found himself swimming around in the lagoon itself, while the shell lay upside down, cracked and broken, against one wall.

For a bit the little fish remained, bewildered, but then realized that this accident was all to the good. Why should he have remained even so long inhabiting the shell, divorced from his pal, the big fish? He would find him now and they would set out together, separated no longer on the journey through life.

But search though he might he could not find the big fish anywhere. Even stranger, he could find no fish of any description, large or small, throughout the entrapped fluids of the sea cave. Nothing but a great hideous troll that lay snoring half in, half out of the lagoon.

Suddenly the little fish stopped in horror. That snoring! It was of exactly the timbre of the gruff voice of his friend, the big and beautiful fish. And all at once the terrible truth dawned on him.

He swam at once to a piece of the broken mollusk shell and observed how its convex shiny surface reflected and enlarged whatever appeared before it. How could he have been such a fool all these days and weeks?

The little fish sank to the bottom of the pool and lay there in shock. So it was all over then: the wonderful conversations, the reciprocal admiration, the interest and the charm and the variety of their society. All blown away because one of the loving pair had been in error about what the other one looked like.

And then as if from far off a tiny thought came to the after all not brainless little fish: a thought that grew in geometrical progression 'til it swelled and blew his mind. It was only *now* than he was being a fool! and stupid idiot.

Slowly be oscillated his fins, fluttered his gills, and drifted to the top of the pool. He had but a single thought: I must never let him know.

With just the faintest shudder, hastily suppressed, the little fish swam toward one gross ankle of the horrendous ugliest troll. He made a tentative dart at the exposed hide, recoiled, and then, returned to go about the task grimly.

Presently the nipping nibbling feeling at his foot wakened the slumbering troll. Startled, he looked down at his ankle and cried, "Hi! little fish! What are you doing there?"

The little fish turned. "Oh, hi," he said casually, "Just getting off some of these barnacles."

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y

The outer doors of the antechamber were drawn back and O.Z. Diggs, closely followed by the scholarly-looking Xavier Jaxon, bustled in. "Aha!" cried the savant. "What have we here? Hatching a little plot, are you?"

Fattywiggins and Langley the guardsman did look a little conspiratorial as they stood close together near the opposite, inner doors.

"Why aren't you in the throne room with Princess Ozma, my dear Fats?" went on the Wizard jocularly.

"I'm in disgrace," stated the young girl near-formally. "I wasn't getting along all that well with one of those fairies Ozma has flying around."

"Arguing with a fairy will get you nowhere but in trouble," pontificated the Wizard. "They're always right—by definition."

"Bat what about you, dear professor?" Fattyw had picked up the appellative from her pal Xavier Jaxon, to whom she now nodded comradely. "Why aren't you with Ozma? and since way back. She's been waiting for you forever to sample that punch you sent in."

"Oh, goodness, yes, that punch!" cried Diggs and slapped his forehead. "I got carried away with other experiments. Xavier

will tell you as much. Now see here, for instance, what I've brought along for your science lesson today." Here the wise man held up a modest-sized jar containing a clear liquid.

"Oh, lessons," said Fattywiggins, deflated. "I don't feel much like lessons today."

"What's the matter?" Fatty had seen the flavorful cows and empty ice cream churn brought out and had divined her fate. "I think I've just missed out on some delicious ice cream. Besides, I ought to have been present as the Princess' official food taster. And now it looks like I'm going to miss sampling your famous punch—if they ever get around to bringing it back from the kitchen."

"Kitchen?" echoed the Wizard, and Fattywiggins told him about the decision to decant the beverage into a vessel more suitable for serving from on a queen's twenty-first birthday.

"But what have you got there?" the girl went on. "It looks like a glass of water with a string in it, attached to—is that a screw?"

"Take a taste of this solution," offered Diggs, while his assistant looked on with as much interest as Fattyw.

F.W. did as she was told. "Hmh, Just tastes like sugar water."

"Quite right! But a super-concentrated sugar water. Now watch." O.Z. pulled gently on the string and as it broke the surface of the syrupy liquid the spectators could see a series of chunky crystals clinging to it.

"Oh, wow," said Fattywiggins, containing her excitement. "I'll bet you those are sugar crystals."

"Just so. This is the way we make what is known as rock candy. There you have your little science lesson for the day. Actually the demonstration was suggested to me by a larger research trial I've been conducting in the laboratory. Xavier here will confirm I got deeply involved. That's what made me late for the punch-tasting."

"What research was that, professor?" asked Fattywiggins, getting interested in spite of herself. Before she could have her answer, however, there was a commotion at the outer doors and

guardsman Langley let in a deputation from the kitchens. They came through bearing on a great silver tray the ceremonial punch bowl.

The Wizard and his assistant stood back to let the procession pass but Fatty, ever curious, went to meet the group and tagged along, muttering to herself, "They're still in there," as she peered deep into the great green-filled diamond bowl. She watched the doors to the throne room drawn back and the party pass within.

Wizard Diggs, wound up in the fascination of his subject, was continuing, "Precious stones are formed in just the same way as rock candy, Fatty. It just takes a little longer... well, a lot longer. That's the worst of jewels and the factor that makes them so sought-after; it takes such ages to produce them. But it remains simply a matter of accumulation of crystals."

"What was the experiment?" asked the child, turning her attention back to the Wizard and the topic.

"In my researches I've come up with a method of harnessing lightning. That's pure concentrated electricity, you know. To cut a long, and absorbing, story short, I found that by introducing supercondensed electricity into a mineral solution I could produce, for example, emeralds in a millionth of the time it takes nature to do it. Great big gorgeous crystals, at that; far larger than are ever produced in nature. There's just one tiresome side effect—"

"Oh? What's that?" put in Xavier Jaxon.

"Such jewels and the salt solution they come from, thus impregnated with electricity, are a violent poison—at least to the human constitution. Great Scot! Fattywiggins, what's the matter?"

The little girl had gone all pale. Without a word of reply she bolted to the doors to the audience hall, tore one open, and rushed screaming toward the throne. Thither Princess Oz had retreated, followed by Serena and a number of the courtiers who still remained in the hall. The tray supporting the punch bowl had been balanced on the taboret, and the girl ruler was in the

very act of carrying to her lips the diamond dipper.

"Stop! Stop!" shrieked the fat heroine, raced to her sovereign, and struck the dipper from her hand. The implement flew to the floor end splashed poisonous green in all directions. "Don't drink, Ozma!" Fatty raved on. "That's deadly poison! And not just to look at either!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The fairy vigilantes led by Moth waited until the brazier fire in the barn had at last winked out before flying up into the rafters to keep watch over the fortunes of the prisoner pigs. They were not to report back to queen Lurline until they had seen whither the kidnap party would make its way in the morning.

The sprites who had remained in the vineyard were exercised to get the crimping blocks out of their hair and the released tresses combed and packed away in hair nets before it should be quite too dark to see what they were doing. They were thus engaged when envoy Peaseblossom made her appearance on her return from the court of the anniversing Ozma, queen of Oz.

Peaseblossom was in high dudgeon, still irate at the treatment she had received at the hands, and, alas, other parts of the body, of the presumptuous Fattywiggins, favorite and familiar of the popular princess. The fairy needed no urging to tell everybody what had happened, right on to the ignominious retreat before the looming thighs and beetling buttocks of the young girl.

"But what hurt most of all," wept Peaseblossom, calling the roll of the indignities she had suffered at court, "was her having

the nerve to imply that our gift was not all it should have been. She actually had the temerity to grouse because one of the hard centers broke her tooth. But that was just the point of it all, and everyone enjoyed the jape enormously."

"Well, I should hope so," sympathized Lurline. "The emeralds were a surprise treat and a most valuable gift at the same time. I hope Ozma understood that they were of the highest carat rating. But did she do nothing to chastise the overweening Fattywiggins?"

"I didn't stay to see," replied Peaseblossom. "But is it likely? The woman seems besotted with the young interloper. I can't think why."

"Oh, that's easy, Pease dear," stated Lurline nonchalantly. "From what I've seen, and I've been at Ozma's court a time or two, the girl ruler has a strong need for intimates of her own (apparent) age and (current) sex, and with Dorothy Gale off on that long expedition with her relatives, I suppose Ozma grasps at straws—"

"She's caught a straw this time all right," put in Peaseblossom spitefully, "—although the shape doesn't jibe."

"We can only hope the Princess soon finds some alternative girls to love[§]," said Lurline piously.

After that there remained little to be said, as, with assistance, Lurline drew from her hair the vine tendrils she had employed to produce lovely pipe curls. Soon the band of immortals had settled down to listen to a bedtime story told by Mustardseed in a singsong voice sufficiently lulling.

But Queen Lurline rose before the break of day. She wanted to check with Moth as to the hoped-for well-being of the captive Caresso-Pigs they had seen carried into durance the evening before. Then she wished to put into effect a plan she had conceived that same evening, one suggested in fact by the very story Mustardseed had soothed them to sleep with: that of unaccountably very *kind* trolls.

§ It's all right. Help is on the way. See *Tik-Tok of Oz* and *The Scarecrow of Oz*. Editor's note.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The arrival of the Wizard of Oz in Princess Ozma's throne room to sample the punch! It was second only to Tosca's singing of "Visst d'arte" among interminably put-off events.

In the event the scene was greatly different from what those present might earlier have anticipated. The Wizard was doing some fast self-exculpation. "I'm extremely sorry, your majesty," Diggs apologized profusely. "I had no idea that you were in fact waiting for me before sampling the punch. I *had* meant to be present but I got wrapped up in experimentation with berylium and aluminum salts and did not watch the time. However, I did succeed in bringing off an enormously accelerated production of emerald crystals, as you see here. But what I can't at all account for is how the salts bath got *here*. I must say it does rather resemble that harmless seamint-flavored drink we sent down earlier. What do you suppose...?"

Further commotions at the doors to the anteroom and the outer hallway, which had all been left open in the excitement. A number of the court celebrities led in the frightened cook and chef de cuisine, together with a ragtag of waiters and scullery maids. These were ranged before the throne and there they stood and trembled.

Ozma looked grave and spoke very quietly. "It seems, then, that we have been served a poisoned drink for our delectation. May I enquire..." She left her question uncompleted, recoiling from the enunciation of an accusation of attempted murder.

Chef Etum Uppe spoke for his co-workers. "I of course took no part in the search, being concerned with a perusal of accounts in the butler's pantry, but as I can learn the kitchen staff could not find the diamond punch bowl ordained by Your Grace for serving of the beverage. An hour or more was lost in fruitless ransacking of every cupboard and cabinet. Finally in desperation the entire corps of servants fanned out through the palace. Only then did the vessel come to light, resting, of all places, on the corridor floor in the good Wizard's tower, and filled with this liquid as you see it now. How it came there no one knew but no time was lost in transporting it down to ground level and presenting it here. More I, or any of my staff, cannot relate."

"How very strange," observed the girl ruler. "But tell me: what happened to the original, and harmless, green liquor which was first introduced here? I know it was carried to the kitchens."

"That too is indeed peculiar, your highness. It has disappeared. Probably tipped away, I should suppose. And the odd tureen which had contained it —"

"One of my mixing vats," put in Wizard Diggs.

"Just so." Chef Uppe continued, "It was discovered behind a door in the root cellar when the alarm was sounded about the disastrous mix-up here. Empty, of course."

Ozma pursued the matter to the extent of asking if any individual could be suspected of having made the change. No one could conceive of anything so frightful being attempted by anyone within or near the Palace of Magic.

"Well, then," the Princess went on, "was anyone at all even seen in the kitchen regions who had no clear reason to be there?"

Here the jolly cook Fregosa put in a word, "Oh, Your Majesty, everyone has always been welcome for a between-meals

bite in the kitchen. The footmen regularly bring visitors there who don't get offered something at audiences and the like. I myself noticed a Gillikin farmer with his cows in the dairy cellar today—"

"And I an old woman in a purple cloak," recalled the chef.

"And then our guardsmen friends and the cleaning staff and the Kapellmeister, and... Wasn't even Miss Fatty in at one point?" the cook asked, smoothing her apron nervously at her own temerity.

"Definitely," confirmed the young heroine. "I'd just been kicked out of the Presence and was hating everything. I went down to the kitchen to comfort myself with apples."

"Did you find any, Fatty?" put in the Wizard whimsically.

"Well, yes, I did. There was a nice little bushel basket of them. But the point is, I certainly didn't do any switching of green liquids."

"Nobody suspects you, dearest," quoth Ozma. "Especially since it was you who sounded the alarm. At least, I would never imagine you putting anyone in danger only to make points by rescuing her from it later on."

Fattywiggins just grinned. Anyway she was back in her dear sovereign's good graces with a vengeance.

Now at last Ozma was free to leave the presence chamber after the most exhausting reception she could ever remember having held. But the thoughtful Girl Ruler had not thrown off the sense of ill omen she had labored under all the morning. Some one *had* tried to poison her. Or rather, it was subtler than that.

Everyone at court, and indeed everyone in Oz, knew that she, Ozma, was a fairy and an immortal. Poisons could have no effect upon her. But who, in any case, and under normal conditions, would be the one first to taste whatever might be served to the Queen of Oz?

Why, Miss Fattywiggins, her official taster.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Very quietly Queen Lurline went about her morning toilet. First she folded neatly the gossamer blanket she had worn for sleeping, cocoon-fashion, in a curled grape leaf. Fresh dew lay over everything and she took up a kingcupful to bathe her face and sprinkle some moisture over her hair, which, she saw reflected in a dewdrop, still looked gorgeous from the day before.

Next she preened her wings with the dried but still sufficiently feathery antenna from a defunct butterfly. (Such equipment was shipped in from abroad where, alas, butterflies were still capable of dying.) Soon her pinions gleamed with their accustomed iridescence and the intricate chequer pattern stood out clearly.

She was rather hoping that Moth or one of the latter's lieutenants would put in an appearance quickly, now that morning had come. She waited a little while, stuck a straw in a plump grape, and drank her breakfast.

She looked at her watch. This was no good. She must be off. She was tempted to wake someone to tell where she was bound but decided her followers needed their sleep and anyway she didn't intend taking them with her. With a last drag on the juice

straw she spread her wings and oscillated her antennae. Vibrations were caught from the direction in which Moth had betaken herself, and Lurline flew off silently thither.

Yea, there they were, the group of captors and captives trailing drearily along a minor branch of the road of puce bricks. Some distance in their rear hovered a cloud of fairies flying look-out. Lurline met them on a patch of magenta dandelions going to seed and gave them their instructions.

"Myself," she intimated, "I'm off to look up a certain 'Ugliest Troll'. From what I hear of him he might he helpful in bringing about a rapprochement in what I sense as a growing rivalry among Oz tribes. The trolls and the pigs, for instance, ought to be like blood brothers, yet here we find the ones trying to sell the others into slavery, if not worse."

"It's all the fault of these wretched trolls, wanting to introduce capitalism into Oz economy," complained Moth. She had heard the trolls' drunken conversation the night before and knew that the ugly creatures not only looked but did ugly. Used to operating on a market economy within their own society they were determined to foist the shabby system on the whole of their new fosterland. The result could not help but bring grief and desolation for the hapless ones the regimen would affect—and a couple of caresso-pigs were among the first victims.

"Oh, fays!" exclaimed Lurline. "The next thing you know labor unions will be raising their dreadful heads." Little did she in fact suspect!

But for now there were more important things to be considered. Lurline sent a committee of the troll-followers to alert princess Ozma, Sorceress Glinda, and others in authority as to the local situation. Others were told off to persevere in surveillance over the kidnap party. Herself, she flew away, toute seule, toward the east, there to seek the grotto of the Ugliest Troll.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Fattywiggins was proving once again her right to the use of the syllable "fat". She was not only fat but fatuous. Indeed, some persons conversant with arcanities of language and linguistics suspected that in the shortened form of her name often used, "Fattyw", the 'W' had its value as in Welsh, and the epithet amounted in fact to an abbreviation of just that word "fatuous".

For what could be more 'vacantly silly, purposeless, and idiotic' than an insistence upon the use of roller skates on the staircases and across the inlaid marble floors of the Palace of Magic.

"Hey, look at me! Look what I can do!" Fatty was yelling at this very moment as she sought to catch the attention of Queen Ozma and the Wizard on the south terrace of the palace. Down she swooped along a ramp leading from that venue of strolling or tea-drinking. In her desire and pursuit of an audience she paid more attention to her spectators than to where she was going. She reaped the full reward of her inattention by flying off the end of the ramp, supranavigating three yards of shrubbery, and crashing down on the barrow of a harmless vendor of maple syrup who stood on the side walk. It was a case of mass over maple-cart.

"Oh, well done, Fattyw!" cried queen and courtier from the balustrade above and gave the little lady a big hand.

"I couldn't have done better myself," added Wizard Diggs, "if as well."

Silently F.W. withdrew her thigh from the syrup barrel, gave the peddler *one look*, and stalked off, her skates dragging from their straps.

Fattywiggins had not come unprovisioned. In the pocket of her gingham skirt she had a supply of poison-pen letters, an essay on aesthetics she had been writing, and the famous green envelope that had been slipped under the door of Ozma's audience chamber yesterday. This last, when in her angry mood, Fattyw had kept concealed from its supposed rightful recipient. Without grounds she imagined it to contain incriminating evidence of hole-and-corner romantic exploits by her protector. (Fats' pal, Xavier Jaxon, had blabbed about the Wizard's mind-boggling reference to the fairy princess' "love life" as revealed in the horoscope.)

On the other hand, she had reflected grudgingly, there was just the chance that Ozma was innocent of wrongdoing (as any entanglement of the heart on the part of an unwed female regent would naturally be regarded in Oz). The letter might be the product of a one-sided affair, providing slight gratification to the writer and none to the addressee. To guard against the realization of any such deflating denouement for the nonce, Fatty had not yet opened the envelope.

Now she called disgruntledly up to the balcony, "Mail for you, your grace," and waited while Ozma came down the steps to her. She had some idea of pretending she had fast came across the billet in the maple barrow or elsewhere but in the end, with scant grace, merely muttered,. "I forgot to give it to you."

"What could this be?" said the Princess.

"Search me. Just an old letter." In fact, the heart-shaped seal on the flap made Fats think the missive was not routine, but she devoted only a moment to the reflection before directing her steps to a drained and dry fountain basin where she was going

to essay her next star turn.

As Ozma, back on the terrace, opened her letter, the Wizard twirled the zodiac Wheel that Xavier Jaxon had constructed to the Professor's specifications. Diggs had been casting his queen's horoscope with a particular view to her erotic destiny and comparing it with the love line in her palm. Frustratingly the latter appeared long but diffuse and the horoscope reading revealed that Ozma's deepest love was directed only at her people in general.

The princess moved to a table overlooking the fountain basin, sat down, and read the letter, the Wizard eyeing her dubiously. When she had done she silently passed the missive across to her adviser.

"It's signed 'An admirer of Princess Ozma'," he constated.

"Yes, I know," assented the ruler. "What do you suppose it means?"

"It doesn't make too much sense, does it?"

"Why would someone send me something like that?" pursued the girl.

"I don't know. Maybe it's just some crank poet trying to get a bit of extracurricular recognition by addressing his effusions to crowned heads."

"Oh." This was a new idea for the princess. "You think that's intended as a poem, do you? I mean, it doesn't rhyme or have any metre or make sense or anything."

The Wizard laughed delightedly. "Oh, dear me, your grace, if you'll forgive me, you're woefully behind the times. Nowadays a 'poem' doesn't require to have anything that sets it apart from, let alone above, any other piece of writing. It's all a matter of typography. Take any arbitrary collection of words, print them in very short lines, and you've got a poem."

This discussion had gone on far beyond the limits of Fattywiggins' patience as a non-center of attraction. She was standing in the middle of the dry fountain basin with her skates on her feet and her fists on her hips. "*Hey!*" she screamed. "Look at me!"

Queen and wizard dutifully turned their heads. "Okay? I'm ready!" the clamor went on. "Watch me now, everyone!"

The couple moved to the terrace railing. It was too much to expect that Fattyw would come a cropper twice running—or rather, skating—but they didn't want to miss it if she did. Ozma crossed her fingers as she called back, "You be careful now."

Fatty took a running start, skated up the sloping side of the basin, turned, and rushed down again toward the opposite side of the fountain. Here she twisted to the left and in a counter-clockwise move flew up another side of the basin, steering her body weight in all directions just in case one of them should be right. In a few seconds she had sailed to the rim of the fountain.

Next she sped back clockwise, roared round to the other side, gained the right lip of the basin, collected all her weight—and that was considerable—and launched herself through the air. Incontinently she disappeared beyond the fountain rim.

There was a silence, followed presently by a sound of crying, down behind the fountain. "Oh, dear," murmured Ozma.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

The careful reader will not have been entirely satisfied by the explanation attempted palmed off in chapter seventeen as to how it came about that Miss Fattywiggins had been separated from her alter egos, the Caresso-Pigs. There it was stated that they had been sent to replenish the population in Gillikinland of that land's heraldic beasts. That was only partially correct, accounting for why they had gone to the purple country rather than another.

But why were they suffered to be sent away at all? There had been pigs in every direction round the young heroine when first she came to Oz.[§] The true rationale is more complex and had to do with the belief of Queen Ozma in a prophecy (conceivably false) that an animal or animals, probably domestic, might compass her downfall or, at least, a serious defeat. The result had been a gradual distancing of the little ruler from *all* her earlier animal intimates. Not that she suspected for a moment that the Courageous ("Cowardly") Lion, say, or the Woozy, would himself, deliberately, do her any harm, but that he—or some possible she—could be the inadvertent agent of a disaster.

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§ See again, *Fattywiggins & The Caresso-Pigs in Oz*. Editor's note.

The upshot was that the Lion and his pal, the Hungry Tiger, had been given indefinite leave to go rule, and assistant-rule, the Lion's Animal Kingdom. The Woozy, together with those palace pets, the Pink Kitten and the China Dog, had been politely exiled.§ Even the tried and true Sawhorse was on leave of absence to haul Dorothy Gale and her relatives around Oz.

As for the caresso-pigs—*and* the Wizard's nine tiny piglets (even including Ozma's own favorite, Pigmy)—they had all answered the call when advice came from Sorceress Glinda that swine colonists were wanted in Gillikinland. Of course! they were given assurance that they would not end up in ovens. (Some other, anonymous, pigs, if such could be found, might suffer that fate.)

So now we find the caresso-pigs having the time of their lives, living happily together not far from the hut residence of the once wicked (but now apparently trying-to-go-straight) witch Mombi in the shadow of the Gillikin Mountains.

Well, they *had* been living happily together. Now it seemed that the case was altered, for here are Biff and Cleo sitting upon the curbstone of the road of lilac bricks where it passed in front of their house and each crying into a large handkerchief. Occasionally one or both would stop to blow his or her snout.

It was obvious that word of the abduction of their brother and sister had reached the family home of the Caresso-pigs.

"We shall never see them any more," moaned Biff. "Poor Nilnul; poor Wee," wept Cleo,

"They were such a good brother and sister," continued Biff. "If I had been there I would have seen that nothing bad happened to them."

"Wee is too tiny to have done anyone any harm," sobbed Cleo.

As the two continued their litany of praise and grief for the missing siblings a solitary figure approached them. It was Mombi, returning from her sojourn in the Emerald City where she had presented the powerful eggs to Princess Ozma. She was

§ See *The Pink Kitten in Oz.* Editor's note.

tired and was moving along the road slowly, looking around every once in a while to avoid any repetition of her encounter with the crazy unicyclists who frequented this newest of Oz roads.

The witch came up to where Biff and Cleo were weeping. In her new mild mood Mombi was not unsympathetic to people, or pigs, in tears.

"What are you little creatures crying about?" she enquired. "Did someone snatch your ball away? Or have your mother and father been punishing you?"

"Neither," said Biff.

"We have no mother or father," stated Cleo, still sobbing. "It's the wicked Norreganes. They've followed us to Oz and now it seems they've caught up with Wee and Nilnul. They were on a walking tour."

Biff objected. "I've told you and told you; it's not the Norreganes who have taken our brother and sister away, but rather the Trolls."

"Oh, you think it was the trolls, do you, Mr. Pig?" said Mombi sympathetically.

"Definitely. *You* wouldn't have seen them anywhere, would you?"

"Oh, no, I'm coming from the other direction. You did say 'trolls'? and of course they hang out farther on up in the north."

Brother and sister wept on until Mombi herself had to observe the amenities. "Shall we go inside? And might an old lady ask for a drink of water?"

The pigs put a period to their puling, rose silently, and gestured Mom in through the gate. Biff went to the well and took a ladleful of water from the bucket.

The rest of the family of swine seemed to be taking the disappearance of their relatives in stride. They were playing some sort of game on the lawn and Mombi watched.

She had heard of pigs employed to hunt truffles and this seemed to be a variation on that theme. Pigs were everywhere in the garden, scrambling to and fro, running along, snouts to

the ground, and stopping frequently to root small purple objects out of the damp soil.

"Another!"

"Here's another amethyst!"

"Now I've got twelve!"

"I've found thirteen!"

One pig paused in its search and said confidentially to Mombi, "Isn't it amusing? All the pebbles in the country appear to have turned into amethysts!"

"That's new," agreed the witch. "But if amethysts are that common, why are you gathering them so feverishly?"

The pig eyed Mombi critically. "They're just as lovely as before even if they are common," and it went back to its truffling.

Even as the witch sipped and watched, two of the swine left the game and went into the house. It was Suze and Lazlodes. As Suze put a cauldron of water over the kitchen fire Lazlodes sat on his haunches on the floor and with his fat foothands stripped the husks from plump corn ears. Suze threw them into the soon boiling pot.

Presently, "I think we have as many ears as this old thing is going to hold," said Suze, but when she saw Mombi at the door she forced in two additional purple cobs. "Always enough for one more," she said welcomingly.

"That's kind of you," said the witch and she sucked the last drop of water from the ladle. "I don't think I'd have made it the rest of the way without something to eat."

Lazlodes only grunted, as he nosed the corn husks into a heap to presently go on the fire. But Suze smiled and said, "Of course"; the visitor was welcome to join the family for what was admittedly to be a corny meal.

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - S I X

"May I read the letter?" Fattywiggins enquired when they had bandaged her knees and knuckles

"I suppose there is no harm in your doing so," assented Ozma.

Fatty opened the squib and perused it. It went:

"I'm expectant.
We're expectant.
No, I'm not talking about
Motherhood
Nor paternity.
This is a neuter condition,
Sometimes temporary.
Sometimes seems forever.
Just expectancy!
Sometimes anticipation
To the point of evoking
Thought-provoking
Perspiration.
Expectant but with no indication
As to when there might be a halt
To its duration

Of endless wanted time.
My anxiety
Can only be matched by my expectancy,
My expectancy exasperates my anxiety,
And when anxiety exacerbates
My exasperation...
Well, you know how I feel
Because of the hum of activity
Circumscribing my expectancy
Whether real or imagined.
Expectancy!
Expectancy!"

Fattywiggins did not know what to make of the poem. It was strange and it did not make very much sense. What was the person anxious about? Of what expectant? And who was the person?

Princess Ozma could be said to be anxious. She was anxious to please all her subjects by her wise rule and unfailing good spirits, but it was beyond reason that she could have written the poem letter to herself. Her subjects in turn were expectant but only of having a good time at the upcoming birthday festivities.

The girl ruler looked pensive. Fattyw misinterpreted her glance as indicative of a desire to carry on with the consideration of literary effusions. Hastily F.W. drew from her pocket her essay, licked the syrup from it, and handed it across.

"The Beauty of Telegraph and Telephone Poles" read Ozma. But she didn't want to spend time on the rest of the essay. Instead, rather too obviously, she turned the conversation.

"Do you suppose those eggs the old woman gave me will do what she said?"

'"It's against all scientific probability," pronounced the Wizard. "By the way, what did she say they'd do?"

"She didn't. But she said they were to be awed in the contest with the Purpleys, who, or which, are on the increase. Tell me, O.Z., do you think it's getting purpler around here?"

Diggs looked about him. "Now that you mention it, my dear

Princess, it does strike me that the air, if anything, is faintly more lavender than heretofore."

"I suppose that's it then. And the eggs are somehow to be made use of in curing the condition. But I can't for the life of me think how."

"The people are getting purpler," put in Fattyw, looking up from nursing her knee.

"What do you mean, Fatty?" Ozma wanted to know.

"Well, most of the ones who put in to see you yesterday were from Gillikinland. And when you walk, or skate, around town you notice at least half the people are dressed in violet, not green."

The Wizard patted her head and said, "Observant child."

"I suppose," said Ozma with a sigh, "I must get busy doing something about it. I'd have thought Glinda would be able to cope but—"

Diggs broke in, begging his Queen's pardon. "The great sorceress has been consulted?"

"Oh, I naturally put in a call to her immediately after yesterday's audience." Ozma shook her lawn sleeve and flashed her two-way wrist radio significantly. "It turns out the Good Witch has known about the condition for weeks, if not months, and has been taking measures. Not that they seem to have done much good. She's alerted all the fairies in Gillikinland and would you believe it? The great Lurline herself has taken a sabbatical and is personally keeping a watching brief on developments up there. Funny—" The Girl Ruler paused suddenly.

O.Z. Diggs and Fattywiggins glanced with attention at their startled sovereign. Their questions were implicit.

"I just happened to think. What do you suppose it means? Peaseblossom was dressed all in heliotrope yesterday! And remember those chocolates?"

The question was rhetorical but Fats answered it. "How could I forget?" and the girl switched a hand from nursing her knee to nursing her jaw.

"They were all violet too, except for the specifically emerald

centers. You don't suppose—" The Queen looked alarmed. "that instead of Lurline and her bunch fighting the Purpleys they've joined them?!"