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

Gerry Giraffe elected to amble along beside the red wagon of those who were going to visit the Swyne family. He wasn't going anywhere else—had no travel plans at all; in fact, no plans period. As far as he could make out he was in a setting where he had never been before. That was already travel enough and it left him completely disoriented. The only plan he could even imagine was possibly trying to get back to the little outdoor zoo at Paignton, Devonshire, and somehow the idea of that filled him with distaste, although already he could hardly have told you why.

As for Lana Peethisaw, she certainly didn't intend to be parted from the person she had already become fondest of, this side of the Shifting Sands. Oh, she had a great fondness for Queen Ozma and much esteem for the Wizard, O.Z. Diggs, and even the obliging taciturn Sawhorse. But she loved Gerry Giraffe. Funny how the heart is. Grab somebody's hat with your lips and you may find out.

Ozma conceded at once when Lana wanted to invite the giraffe along. There was of course no question of the little girl's clinging on her favorite's back and riding along that way. Giraffes

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are your non-beast-of-burden *par excellence*. There's no level place to sit or to deposit loads. There's nothing to hold onto without awful straining upward. The undulating canter is guaranteed to shake off anything that may have lodged on the giraffe's back. So Gerry just ambled along beside the red wagon. Now and then he lowered his head to the others' level to let know that he was still there any who might have missed the beautiful long rose-patterned legs (with that curious stiffness) that moved beside the carriage.

Thrown back on her own devices, the Winkie girl reverted to her former question to the Wizard; would he tell her something about the pigs they were going to visit?

"It all began—" reminisced the amiable old man, "as far as I became concerned—when I was operating the old shell game at a midway in Los Angeles." He broke off to explain for neophyte Lana and the Queen of Oz, for that matter—what a shell game was. That in turn made it necessary to explain why anyone of such probity as the Wonderful Wizard of Oz should have been engaged in any business as dubious as that. Mr. Diggs gallantly made light of the distresses he had suffered since his creaky old balloon, returning from Oz, had gone down in a swamp in Manitoba, and of the number of meals he had missed until he gravitated back into circus life in the United States.

"It was the disappearance aspect of the shell game that fascinated me," he explained, "not the hoodwinking—or, if you will, cheating—of my customers. The penny was always there, under one of the shells, if they could but have divined which one. But I loved being able to mystify them, and I grew clever at it. Apparently the public liked it too because they always came back for more. I began to branch out. Hiding coins and nuts about my person became too easy. I took to concealing doves, and even a mangy rabbit, about other persons' persons and then drawing them forth, to general amazement and acclaim.

"One day at the shell table a drunken sailor approached me. He had, he said, a number of pigs for sale.

"'Pigs?'" I said. 'But I'm not in the pork business.'

“‘No-o,’ he admitted blearily. But these were pigs with a difference. They were *that* small! And indeed, when he brought them forth from his kit bag, they were of a diminutiveness! I saw at once they would be perfect for my act. But could I afford them? Pigs of that rarity ought to be in a zoo, if not a museum.

“I affected indifference but deigned to listen to what price he was asking for them. Five dollars a pig! It was a fantastic buy. But I must not appear too eager. He began to sell. They were his mother’s pigs, he explained, and he loved them dearly every one. ‘But, see yet’ he blurred further, ‘I ain’t et all day.’ He made no such claim about drinking. He was on his beam-ends, he mourned, and was down to his last nine pigs. Would I have a heart?

“I made sure I had all nine swine in a hamper I happened to have by me before I handed over fifty dollars, five extra to seal the deal. ‘Where did you get them?’ I demanded coldly.

“‘Off the islan’ of Teen’yweent,’ he explained, no more remembering the mother than I had believed in her.

“‘Where might that be?’ I wanted to know.

“‘In the Pacific — this side o’ the San’wickees. It’s an islan’ where everything is liddle-biddy. Why, even the hours are no bigger’n a minute!’

“I took this last for a sickly essay at humor. I was not inclined to tarry in the fellow’s company. But first I made some show of trying to establish the legality of the transaction. ‘The pigs are—were!—your own property?’ I insisted.

“‘Oh, absolutely, yur honor!’

“No doubt I let myself be too easily reassured. But I was wild, don’t you know, to possess so ideal an adjunct to my carnival act. The pigs proved admirably teachable. I could not doubt their intelligence and I had every day proofs of their tractability. The illusion we practised: of my being able to part one pig into two, grew steadily in convincingness.

“I should have been content with the *renommée* I was gaining as a reliable prestidigitator.

“But no. In talk with the carnival proprietor I let slip that I had once piloted a balloon. The next thing I knew he had bought out

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of mothballs a tatty old gas bag left over from the St. Louis world's fair, and there I was; aloft again, advertising in the sky.

"The rest you know. I presently came down in the land of the Mangaboos and Dorothy Gale and I reached Oz, I never to return to the land of my birth."

"No, indeed, O.Z.," confirmed Princess Ozma from the driver's seat, "...unless one day you should *choose* to return there—but only for a visit."

They all sat on for a moment in a glow of good feeling. But after all that wasn't quite all. Lana still didn't get the connection with the Swyne couple and the Wizard had to continue explaining.

"Of course we hadn't been in Oz any time at all when the pigs woke up to where we were. They'd got their voices, for one thing—for purposes other than squealing and grunting. They announced that this was the land of *their* birth and spoke of how pleased they were to be back. On their first free weekend some or all of them wanted to be off to pay a courtesy call on their parents. They did so, I'm happy to say. Unfortunately I was unable to get away to accompany them and the omission has preyed on my mind to some degree ever since. I'm extremely grateful for the opportunity..." the Wizard trailed off, feeling he should make a big deal of it, but Ozma waved her whip dismissively.

"Such a strange coincidence," mused little Miss Peethisaw. "The piglets are famous in certain circles as coming from the island of Teentyweent, and yet they're also native Ozites and their parents live here. It hardly seems possible to co-ordinate the two sets of data."

"It hasn't been easy!" confirmed the Wizard. "A lot of it is still unclear to me. Frankly, I'm hoping to hear more of the story in a few minutes when we reach the Swynes'. But as I can learn..."

Then Diggs recapped for the little girl what the nine tiny piglets themselves had told him: of their being sent abroad when very young to be educated and of the old happy days in Tiny Town and of the sailor who had altered their fate and of so many mysteries of time and aging and of the mind, and of the strange

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ultimate dream of Blue Hawaii. "It is the piglets' great hope one day to see Teentyweent again."<sup>§</sup>

"Do you think they will ever find it?" she asked.

c h a p t e r      t h i r t y - f o u r

There was frantic activity aboard *Lurline II*.

After her initial pose of cool casualness Fay McQueen virtually shrieked: "We must stop the ship!" At the same time she jerked her pencil wand from her hair-do and made a rapid pass with it, regardless of consequences. Far away in the bowels of the ship the engines choked and died.

Dorothy and Lurline stared. What in the world? They wondered, but they were prevented from wondering long by their new friend's throwing herself, figuratively if not literally, on her knees in front of Capt. Matson's daughter and pleading, "Miss Lurline! Could you? *Would* you use your influence to get the captain to turn the ship around or or put out a boat, or something—and pick up that chicken coop!"

Lurline was alarmed and stuck her head over the side to catch a last glimpse of the floating box before it disappeared toward the stern of the ship. "*That* coop? But what—! Yes, of course, Mme. McQueen, if you say so. But what excuse can I give?" she jabbered as the two females set off at a run for the bridge, Dorothy

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<sup>§</sup> See THE work TINY PIGLETS OF OZ. Editor's note.

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Gale trailing behind and a cortège of fairy stenographers following her.

Captain Conrad was much mystified at his employer's young daughter's urgent request but he gave the necessary command. As it happened, there was a call from the engine room at the same time, reporting unexpected malfunctioning of the brand new engines. A temporary halt to perform a small overhaul would not be amiss. Of course with the engines gone, the halt was inevitable anyway so why not concede gracefully? After all, Miss Matson was a sensible young woman who would not interfere with seamanship for a whim. Besides—he gave a last sop to his sense of duty—the ship was named for her.

Propulsionless, there could be no question of turning the vessel about but a boat was lowered, manned by those seamen surest of their legs in a pitching sea, and in more time than it takes to tell they rowed back the quarter mile to where a nondescript slatted box lurched up and down on the billows.

A crowd of women—girls, really—waited agog at the side of the *Lurline* as the boat was winched up. "Oh, thank you, captain!" cried the captivated queen of the fairies to each sailor in turn as he stepped on deck. The last man to debark had his arms full of the great unwieldy crate. It was deposited on the deck and as Fay McQueen leaned near in a transport of anticipation the ship's carpenter applied hammer and chisel.

Yet when the lid was wedged up they all heard a strange silence within. There was no glad cackle of a rescued fowl. Fairy Butterfly pressed forward, knelt and thrust her arms under the slanting slate. "Wheuh's yo' chiggen, Ma'm McQueen?" she cried.

She groped further and in the remotest recess her hand encountered a sodden bundle of feathers. "Oh, happy day!" cried the dark damsel. "Dauh's yo' chiggen!" and she pulled forth the sorriest-looking yellow hen the world has ever seen.

Ex-Lulea was not worried. She knew she had passed good and sufficient spells. Her favorite was only temporarily the worse for wear. When Billina had squatted briefly and reassured herself that she was again at least on *navis firmus*, the hen clucked a bit and

began to look around her.

Suddenly she gave the squawk of her life and came speedily back to her full perceptions. Let go that she was seeing again that elusive crowd of fairies she'd lost violent track of more than a week ago. There among the collection of curious faces above her was the unmistakable one of Dorothy Gale!

While the fairy women all exclaimed at once, expressing their satisfaction at seeing again the hen they had feared lost to them forever (and Butterfly's voice sang out above the rest, crying, "Oh, hallelujah. It sho' is a happy day!"), Billina screamed greetings to her former protectress.

But slang it was the same deal all over again. In the real world the bird could only talk Chickenglish. Nobody could understand a word she was saying!

The girl from Kansas was not asleep, however. From being a mystified but very sympathetic bystander she now assumed a leading role. The thing was that, from long association, the chicken's native voice, not only her human-speech one, was intimately familiar to the Oz princess. Combine that with the russet-canary color of the fowl and her whole manner of self-presentation and there could be no doubt in Dorothy's mind: this, unbelievable as it might be, was none other than her old favorite and companion in hair-raising adventures, Billina the yellow hen!

The girl did not stop to consider the impossibility of the appearance in the Pacific Ocean of the hen she had last seen clucking contentedly on her roost in the back yard of the Palace of Magic in the Emerald City. She stepped to the crouching Queen of the Fairies, laid a restraining hand on her arm, and said, "Mrs. McQueen," higher honorifics were not in order within earshot of innocent mariners, "that chicken can talk as good English as you or I—"

Fay rocked back on her heels. Not bothering to consider the miraculosity of Miss Gale's knowing anything about the case, she blurted, "Why doesn't she then?"

Dorothy laughed merrily—and it lightened delightfully the tense mood of the moment. "Chickens don't... usually," she

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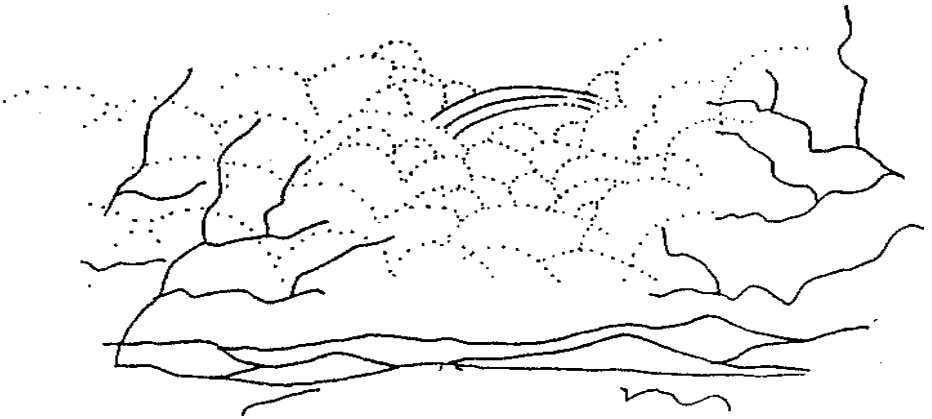
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averred, "not outside Oz."

"Of course. How stupid of me," said ex-Lulea. "My good fellows," she addressed the crewman or two who still stood about, and sent them on some makeshift errand. It wouldn't do to have mortal sailors hear a hen talk. Too much that was strange had already happened in the business school directress' vicinity aboard this ship. She didn't want the men mutinying or anything due to superstitious horror. Billina wasn't an albatross but just the same...

When the area had been cleared of non-initiates, Madame Fay rubbed the talk talisman she always had about her and murmured low but clear, "Let this fowl resume use of her original human language."

At once Billina's voice rang on the damp (though balmy) morning airs "Nå, äntlingen! Kära Ni, jag har ett jätteviktigt meddelande åt Er från Princessan av Oz!"





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

It was a bit much. Queen Ozma of Oz had to stand in the yard and talk to the Swyne couple at their front door. Their home was too small to allow of inviting anyone inside. Nor did the pair seem particularly apologetic about the fact. One almost got the impression they preferred it that way.

“It’s a great pity, really,” said Mrs. Squealina Swyne, keeping her trotters crossed. “The house is enchanting! I’ve decorated it *so* beautifully. You’ve never seen anything like it! But alas, it’s just too tiny for entertaining. Sometimes I do wish we had more room—but of course if we did we wouldn’t have any excuse for not invit—Oh!” she broke off abruptly.

“What Mrs. Swyne is trying to say,” explained Prof. Grunter, “is that we would be but too delighted to be able to entertain on a grand scale, but our accommodations simply don’t run to it. So if you will state your business...”

O.Z. Diggs now took the floor, or rather the ground. There was no garden furniture for them even to be able to sit down. It looked as if the visit would be short.

“I have for some time,” he began, “been wanting to call and

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pay my respects. I have the honor to be associated professionally with your children—”

As he said this the Swynes looked at each other and Mrs. Swyne said, “So that’s him?” and the professor; “Yes, he’s the one.”

Not really flattered by the comments, the Wizard proceeded, “I am devoted to those talented performers, who appear under the name of the ‘Nine Tiny Piglets’—”

“Oh, is that what they call themselves?” broke in Squealina.

“I think Pigbert mentioned something to the effect the time he was here,” confirmed her husband.

“You can imagine my surprise,” pursued O.Z. Diggs, “when after a business relationship extending over many weeks, even months, the pigs and I arrived in Oz and I learned that their parents resided here. I know how worried you would have been all that time—”

“Were we worried?” mused Mrs. Swyne.

“Yes, I believe we were,” the professor tried to put a good face on their attitude. “Of course,” he appended, “we really didn’t know the children had been kidnapped until they turned up here and announced it. By then it was too late to worry.”

“Even so,” the Wizard went on, now only a little short of exasperated, “I have felt it my duty to approach you and reassure you yet again that the nine piglets are well and happy and living in the Emerald City.”

“Good ‘cess to them,” said Professor Swyne, achieving real heartiness.

“They might as well live there as anywhere,” sniffed his wife.

“May I take it then,” Diggs hurried on, “that I have your blessing on my enterprise of retaining the piglets with me and giving them a well-rounded education?”

“What’s it worth to you?” the professor startled everyone by asking. It wasn’t normal procedure or good form in Oz to expect to be paid for things done or kindnesses rendered.

“Oh—er—” said the Wizard, all at sixes and sevens.

Of a sudden the pig professor turned to his wife. “My dear, do I not smell the swill boiling over?”

Mrs. Squealina ducked out of sight on cue. It would be dreadful to get any splashes on her kitchen carpet.

Swyne turned back to the waiting Wizard. "I tell you what I'll do: My wife is house-proud. You may have noticed. But there's too little scope for her talent in this bijou bungalow. It's crammed to the rafters with her little treasures. We could do with a much larger place. You say you're a magician. The pigs also described how capable you were with your enchanter's staff. Could you make over this house to be three or four times larger than it is at present? And yet it must not appear any bigger to the eye of the beholder, lest we be inundated with importunate wayfarers wanting to guest us and eat us out of house and home."

O.Z. Diggs could still only say, "Oh—er..." He had never been asked before to use his magic to so ignoble an end.

Princess Ozma was much more pragmatic. The request would not essentially alter an already existing, if somewhat deplorable, state of affairs. She put in: "When I have returned to my fairy capital I can assist the good Wizard in fulfilling your wish. Once the reconstruction is effected—by magic means—it involves merely the invocation of a simple illusion. Granted!"

The pig professor at once became more genial and hospitable. He even stepped to one side so that the callers could peep within the cottage and verify the existence and beauty of Mrs. Squealina's cuspidors and antimacassars. He waxed effusive and nostalgic. "Observe the particularity with which each object is placed! Nothing could be more exquisite. Mrs. Swyne could not bear for one item to be out of place, or for one mote of duet to remain unswept away. For any refuse to be left lying about would be anathema to her. Picture then what was her grief when she was given to understand that she was with child. I sometimes despaired of her life as the weeks passed and her size increased so that she could not with ease attend to the tidying of our dwelling or the arrangement of her nicknacks. At last we took extreme measures: the nine piglets were born prematurely, the smallest (live!) swine the world has ever seen. But this was Oz and once alive they could not die. There remained no recourse but to pack them off to a boarding

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school the moment they could cope on their own. Luckily, in one of my professional journals we had read of an island in the far ocean where tininess was the norm. There the piglets' diminutive size would pass as the regular thing. We wrote for particulars and before many weeks had passed the young swine were on their way and the house again empty, swept, and garnished. Thus elegantly did we dispose of the litter."

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

It was only a momentary setback.

Captain Matson had taken care that his daughter not learn any Swedish. One didn't want that discrediting air of foreignness hanging over the family and its fortunes. Even so, the Scandinavian expletive did escape him from time to time and Lurline learned to recognize the rhythmic dactyle of Bohuslän speech. Hence, it was she who cried:

"For gosh sakes, she's speaking Swedish!"

At that the fairies all came to and realized that they knew exactly what the hen had said. When they had elected to blot from their memories the recollection of what they had been through in Luleg they forgot to forget the language.

The Fairy Queen cried, "Kyckling lilla! Så underbart att få se Dig igen! Du kan tro vi var ledsna—inte sent, flickor?—"

"För all del, Ere Majestät!" returned the fairies in chorus.

"—då vi trodde att vi aldrig fingo lära känna Dig närmare. Jag var halt utom mig av raseri då jag upptäckte att Du var borta. Va' jag skälde på manskapet! och även kaptenen fick känna på den vassa tungan. Men vad hjälpte dot—"

At this point Lurline Matson, who was only getting the odd word, drew Mrs. McQueen's attention to Dorothy, who wasn't getting any. The fairy stopped her stream of speech, turned several delightful shades, and said, "How idiotic can one get?"

She waved her pencil (now openly revealed to be a fairy wand) and instantly converted everyone present to full conversability in both English and Swedish, even Dorothy, who would never in a million years have any use of the latter language.<sup>§</sup>

"At last!!" shrieked Billina, virtually collapsing with relief and gratification. "I've been desperate to communicate with you for more than a week, Your Fairy Majesty. Quick! There's not a moment to be lost. I'm sent by Princess Ozma of Oz; to request your urgent help in a matter that is beyond her powers of enchantment and which involves the welfare of all Oz!"

The girls all sat down on capstans and hatch-covers to hear the story. It took the yellow hen half an hour to tell it all in well chosen words and not leaving out any important details. When she had done, they all said, "Well...!" and could hardly speak for amazement at all that had happened, among which the crisis looming over Oz nearly got lost in the shuffle.

To think!: that the powerful fairy queen of Oz had been wandering in a desert, bereft of all that power, and that her emissary to the only one who could help had the terrible luck to be washed overboard for the second time in her life. The coincidences were too thick on the ground—or rather, on the water—to be able to handle; that of all places in the world Ambassador Billina should drift ashore on Teentyweent, with its intimate connection with Oz—and that Ozma's great friend Dorothy Gale should turn up on the same ship as did that fairy queen and mentor whom Ozma so urgently was seeking—and, not content with this, that a third Oz-connected personage should make her way to the same ship.

"Well, that part's not so coincidental." Ex-Lulea broke into the circle's half-articulated wonderings. They all stared at her. More marvels to be revealed?

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<sup>§</sup>But wait a minute! See *A Swede in Oz*. Ed. note.

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"Yes," pursued the queen fairy. "Tell me, dear Billina: during your wanderings on the waves did you ever have the impression you were being helped along? in any mysterious way or other?"

"Did I!" ejaculated the chicken. "How interesting you should ask that, your grace. Not right at first, no, but after I left Teentyweent it was as if strange powers took over. To begin with, I was only aware of curious shapes half visible in the waters beneath me—"

"That would be the sea fairies, reconnoitring," posited the Queen. Everyone gaped.

"Then afterwards," pursued the hen, "dolphins took turns pushing that crate along." She glanced aside with some disdain at her floating prison of a week that stood abandoned some distance away. "But it was like that wasn't fast enough. The next thing I knew a whale picked me up and brought me here like an express train. It only dumped me when we were in sight of this ship a little while ago!"

Fay McQueen nodded. "As I said: I was an idiot! —and scoundrel. Of course as soon as I found you and your crate were missing I cast a general spell of protection in your favor. But then I got caught up in a mindless round of pleasure-seeking on Oahu and it wasn't until we were aboard *Lurline* that I had leisure during the long lazy days at sea to reflect on that strange passage: the unexplained appearance of a yellow chicken on the deck of a ship many sea miles from the nearest barnyard. I decided there was more there than met the eye and I became possessed of a great curiosity to know the meaning of the incident. I got in touch with Aquareine, queen of the ocean fairies, and requested her to have her far-flung subjects comb the broad Pacific. In case they encountered a hen in a coop still afloat they were to expedite her to my vessel as quickly as was convenient. Their friends the cetaceans were glad to assist in the rescue operation."

So simple when you heard it explained that way.

"But now to this cloud looming over Oz." The fairy queen spoke only partially figuratively. "Oh, how idiotic I've been," she reiterated in sorrow. "Poor Ozma — and poor Oz. Goodness knows

what's happened to them in the eight days since the poor girl tried to get help by sending you to me." Fay stroked the hen's now nearly dried feathers. They were still sticky with salt.

"I'm not so worried about Oz," remarked the chicken. "The problem's grave but probably wouldn't have got too much graver in a week. But I *am* awfully worried about how the Princess has managed since I left. What if she were still out on that dreary desert! I think she should be rescued without loss of time."

"It does make one uneasy," concurred the queen. "If Ozma had managed to receive other help before this she would certainly have sent subsequent word to me. I've had nothing—But how stupid! *of course!* Nobody knows I'm here! When they tried Burzee and got no answer—Tell me, my dear—" A sudden thought struck her. "—when the little Princess teleported you how did she word the command?"

"I was to turn up in the immediate presence of the Queen of the Fairies—*wherever* she might be. Ozma was clever that way."

"And the fact that she has sent no substitute emissary weighing less than eleven and a half pounds moat mean that she is still in the wilderness, far from her capital and her magic appurtenances."

"Not to mention," put in Billina, "my offspring in the palace courtyard, any one of whom would be glad to come."

"Yes! The case *is* grave. Indeed we must lose no time. So then, how many of us for Oz? Shall we all go?! A wave of the wand—"

Lurline Matson looked enchanted. Not only to be convinced that Oz was real, but to go there oneself! It—

But Dorothy Gale was looking stricken. To have her long-held wish granted so miraculously: an excuse, and a pressing one, to go to Oz! And then—her nimble brain reasoning speedily—to have to decline!

"Oh, your majesty," she mourned. "Lurline can't go to Oz!—and I can't either," she said after only a second's hesitation.

Lurline's face fell and all the fairies stared. *Not go to Oz?* even when invited by a fairy queen? It didn't make sense.

"No," explained Dorothy. "We're due in San Francisco day

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after tomorrow. What in the world is dear Captain Matson going to think—not to mention Miss Lilie—when they tell him his daughter disappeared off the ship in mid-ocean?”

Everybody gasped, and Lurline said, “Dad...!”

“And if Lurline can’t go I’m certainly not going,” declared Dorothy loyally and put her arm about her chum’s waist. “It’ll be bad enough trying to explain how twenty-eight lady passengers, and an important chicken to boot, vanished without a trace.”

Ex-Lulea was thoughtful. “Don’t let that last part disturb you, dear. My followers will wait ’til after the ship’s safely docked. And you were wrong in another particulars ‘Lurline’ *will* go to Oz.”

Before Miss Matson could get her hopes up again the queen fairy made haste to explain her little conceit: “When I meet her I don’t want Princess Ozma calling me by that other distasteful name whatever it was. And ‘Fay McQueen’ was never more than a stop-gap. I decided yesterday. I’m taking the name of this delightful ship where I have passed happy hours. ‘Lurline’: it goes trippingly on the tongue, whether you pronounce it ‘-leen’ or ‘-lye’n’. Also it will be a gratification to honor my new young friend—if you give consent, my dear...?”

Affectionately the queen of the fairies took Miss Matson’s hand.

The fairy band nodded complacently. They remembered. Things had come full circle.



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## c h a p t e r   t h i r t y - s e v e n

The fairy princess of Oz was back at square one. A week out of her life and away from the claims of her loving subjects who sought her constantly to determine their suits at law (Ozma was her own Supreme Court and took those duties seriously)—and what had she to show for it?

Well, the friendship of her little protégée Lana Peethisaw, of course. Her acclamation as regent also of all the ghosts of Oz, indeed of all those who lived on in the magic land when their time in the great world of the real was done. And even the little detail of the Swyne couple's granting of formal fostership rights over their errant offspring to the gratified Wizard of Oz.

But the problem she had originally set off to seek to arbitrate was, if anything, with time, only aggravated. Not a word from Billina and it was now twenty-four hours that the Princess had been back in her capital city. Ozma's first act on her return had been to go to her thaumaturgical laboratory and reinforce the protective spells of Witch Glinda in favor of the hen.

Lulea, supreme ruler of all immortals exercising power in the land of Oz and continent of Sempernumquam, was, it seemed,

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not going to be able to be called on for assistance. Who then could Ozma turn to?

She shut herself up in the library of the Palace of Magic and began to read all the books she'd long promised herself to dip into and so far never had. Sorceress Glinda's wisdom and her possession of the great Book of Records notwithstanding, the richest store of books in all Oz was that in the royal library. The University of Oz would one day have a collection to rival it but that was in the future and besides would be mainly science and literature, rather than magic and fairy lore.

Her project took the young queen all weekend. It was not this time incantations and transformations she was concerned with. It was more like history and geography. If Lulea's vast power could not be tapped into, who otherwise might conceivably help? and where were they to be found?

Ozma filled a sizeable note-pad with her jottings. As soon as ever she would run across a new name and address she would despatch her maid Jellia to send yet another fairygram: Would the recipient drop *everything* and observe the utmost promptness in coming to the Capitol of Oz to render assistance in a national crisis?

Many and jumbled were the notes she took; toward the end perhaps even a bit chaotic:

"..fairy queen of Forest of Lurla on Isle of Yew... Groves of Trom, home of fairy Hallita... forest of Ethop: place that knooks revel in: wild & jungley; knooks guardians of trees... Zurline, Nymph queen... Queen of Water Sprites... King of Sleep Fays, somewhere in Kingdom of Dreams... Frost King & son Jack Frost... Sound Imps ...King & Kingdom of Wind Demons; ditto Light Elves: princes Flash & Twilight, constant companions of Elf kings Flash recklessly uses blinding flashes of lightning bolt & horn of gunpowder; Twilight, unguarded, throws all into darkness with great snuffer & black cloak ... Polychrome & Cloud (or Sky) Fairies... Spirit of Happiness (lives in Laughing Valley), & Spirit of Death...

"Above all other immortals (!?) are ranked Ak, Master Woodsman; Bo, Master Mariner; Kern, Master Husbandman... Fire Is-

landers with prince, Forge John... various fairy tribes of Boboland: Elfeons, Puckerts =? Notabells... fairy unicorn from Halidom... Aquareine, fairy ruler of Mermaids = Sea Fairies" (Ozma herself composed the longer and special message that went to Queen Aquareine.)

"Erma, Queen of Lights; 'King of Animals': their authority overlaps, counteracts? that of King of Light Elves? knooks or other animal fairies such as Beaver Fairies?

"Concludes all benevolent fairy beings of Sempernumquam mentioned by Royal Historian as well as other sources."

But now that she'd got going, the diligent Girl Ruler was not going to be limited to assistance from merely her own continent or by beings necessarily familiar to her countrymen. Dusty old tomes (even Jellia Jamb with her feather duster didn't get around to these volumes all that often) were hauled down and Ozma read up on fay folk never heard of in her own land. The list began to appear endless: elves, sylphs, knooks, imps, fays, sprites, ryls, kewpies, cobolds, naiads, nereids, gnomes, afrites, banshees, mermaids, erls, djinns (or jinns), nisser, tomtar, fatas, trolls, kelpies, harpies, hobgoblins (and plain goblins), bogies, sirens, ogres, dryads, oreads, leprechauns, brownies, demiurges, fauns, hamadryads, nixes, nymphs, peris, pixies, pigwidgeons, toovergodins...

As the devoted scholar got into the second half of the alphabet she came across references that piqued her fellow-feeling curiously. Under "Norway" she read, and noted down: "The Norwegian Thusser, or 'Mound Folk', are tall thin elves of great age and even greater skill. They are the master smiths the Eddas tell us about and are clever mechanics who know the secrets of old runes. They live inside mounds, with all the typical characteristics of village life: children, dogs, parties, dances, quarrels...

"Today, the Christians have succeeded in driving a great number of the thusser out of the country and revile them as 'evil trolls'..."

In a volume on *Russia, Then and Now* she came across statements like "As the arms of Mother Church stretched out to embrace ever more of outlying cultures, feyas, karliks, domovoys,

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and such baggage fell into increasing disuse, large contingents of the fabulous creatures even fleeing the country to seek asylum in less prejudiced regions." "Tiresome religions," muttered the little queen to herself. "They spoil more fun than even politics do."

*The Superiority of the Swedish Ethos* contained the most shocking report of all: "Under the terms of an act of the Riksdag of 1853, reinforced generally by local ordinances, most forms of fairy life were outlawed. The sufferings of hundreds of thousands of displaced elves, fays, näckar, and tomtar were indescribable as they were driven like cattle to the borders and forcibly ejected, into countries scarcely more hospitable than that which they were leaving."

"Poor darlings," Ozma went on talking to herself. "Why weren't we informed?" That was more than half a century ago. Where did they all go? Where are they now?

"I wonder..." she mused on, "They might be more amenable than most to exercising their fairy gifts in a good cause in exchange for a safe refuge at last and a haven from their wanderings."

Sweden. But wasn't that where Queen Lulea herself had been off to lately to receive some kind of honorary award? How peculiar. Deporting all your fairy folk with one hand and summoning in others to be commemorated. That hardly made sense. A further veil of grey settled over Ozma's spirit. Suppose all had not gone so well for Lulea as assumed?

The girl ruler dispatched an urgent message to the Old Woman of the Mountain at Blåkulla. She'd know. And she carried on reading.

"Swedish elves (älvor) are Light Elves, not to be confused with trolls, with whom they have little in common.

"Habitat: live next to rivers, under hills, and in marshes. Their homes can be seen only once by humans and then vanish, never to be found again.

"Identifying marks: not daybound and can travel with ease through air, fire, wood, water, stone. The females ride sunbeams through keyholes. The males prefer to sit on the edges of moors, basking in the sunlight. Both sexes can foretell the future and are

guardians of ancient secrets. Because of their power over all things natural and their great beauty and strength, it is dangerous for mortals to come in contact with them.

“Occupations: by far their favorite and most characteristic is dancing. Can often be seen on moonlit nights, weaving choreographic patterns of incredible complexity, tirelessly capering to the delicate music of stringed instruments. The grass grows better where they have danced and rich circles of green spring up under their feet. The elfin dance remains the most dangerous temptation to those of the mortal world. Men who have stepped inside their magic circles and felt the whirling vibrations can never more find safe haven on earth...”

That was as far as the queen got by Monday evening when she began to be disturbed by unlikely sounds coming from the ballroom.

As requested, the members of Ozma’s court had left her strictly undisturbed all the weekend. They were told off to receive, to welcome, and to make feel at home the various fairy emissaries as they arrived. Now the little queen began to suspect that they had done so by staging an impromptu hoedown.

Just so. Making her entry in the fashion that was to become so popular among royalty in this new century of exaggerated modesty, Ozma suddenly appeared in the great chamber, unannounced, from behind a drapery. She was nearly caromed into by Polychrome, the rainbow’s daughter. As usual, Polychrome was dancing madly and at the moment was further engaged in confirming in her own mind her infatuation for her partner, the Shaggy Man, whom she would soon take the first substantive steps to attempt to capture for her own.<sup>§</sup>

“Oh, Your Majesty!” gasped the charming maiden, stopping in the middle of a back flip.

“Carry on, my dear,” Ozma reassured her. “I’ll just look on for a bit. But early in the morning we must all gather in solemn conclave.. I have something most pressing to discuss.”

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<sup>§</sup> See *The Careless Kangaroo of Oz*. Editor’s note.

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She moved on to the refreshment tables and accepted a sup of dama-fruit punch from Jack Pumpkinhead. There she stood looking out over the fantastic sight of all the fairies and immortals from the entire continent in a blaze of shimmering colors, moving in the mazy motions of a gavotte.

Suddenly the chandeliers flared bright as suns in a most uncharacteristic fashion, the orchestra faltered, the dancers were put off their stroke. A curious hush fell over all.

Then, in the middle of the ballroom, the most majestic-looking of all fairies was seen resplendent. In her arms she held an excited-appearing chicken with primrose-yellow feathers.

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

“How d’ye do?” said the Queen of the Fairies to Princess Ozma of Oz, who advanced rapidly towards her, “My name’s Lurline,” she hurried to put in before the Girl Ruler could say anything. “I believe you sent for me.”

“‘Lurline!’” repeated Ozma, startled. “Queen Lurline! Yes, of course,” she said, remembering her history. “How very kind of you to come!” The two did not shake hands, Lurline’s being full of chicken.

“Very sorry to be so late getting here, don’t ye know! This splendid bird did her best, but I wasn’t on my toes. Stills perhaps I’m not too late,” said the fairy queen, gazing about. “This doesn’t look like a scene of disaster.”

Ozma colored. “Well, no. In fact the focus of our problem doesn’t lie in the Emerald City. But I’d sent for all the available fairy talent to seek their advice, failing that of your own gracious self. Actually the dance was unplanned, I believe. I’ve only just been alerted to it myself.”

Lurline sighed. “The girls would so have enjoyed this! But I dare say duty comes before pleasure,” she went on—a little mysteriously as far as Ozma was concerned. The queen fairy saw the

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questioning expression on the other little queen fairy's face. As they walked toward temporary thrones set up at the side of the hall Queen Lurline began to relate the main heads of her tangled tale.

Ozma had taken the yellow hen in her arms and now smoothed her feathers lovingly as she marveled at the story of her adventures. "Billina, my dear," she murmured, "did you do all that?"

"Yes. And then some," the hen admitted braggadociously, loving the limelight, and she added some further details of her stay on the island of Tinitiwinitihumunuo'ahonomua.

"What a coincidence!" exclaimed Ozma, as if there weren't enough of those in this story already. "I've just come from visiting the Tiny Piglets' parents. Oh, Pigmy would love to hear the news from Teentyweent. I'll send for him." This she proceeded to do, while Queen Lurline accepted Jack Pumpkinhead's invitation to perform a cake-walk.

"And, Billina," went on the little Oz queen presently, "to think you've been with Dorothy! I long with all my heart to see the princess. I hope she is much grown since last I saw her."

"Ay, madam, but I would not have it so."

"Why, my good chicken, it is good to grow. And in the world outside of Oz there's nothing that would slow down her coming to look—let's see; why, fair fifteen she'll be by now."

"Mmm—and looks it," reported the hen. "But I want her—selfishly, I guess—to go on looking like she did when I first knew her. To me that's the real Dorothy."

"To lots of people, I guess," admitted Ozma. "But how real is Dorothy going to seem to anyone if, living for years on end in the outside world, she never grows to appear older than six?"

"I wish we could get her back here to Oz for good," said Billina.

"Me too," agreed the princess colloquially. "Next time she comes here I don't think we'll let her get away again."

With that promise-threat the two tried to be content.

But now Jack Pumpkinhead was escorting the breathless Queen Lurline back to her place. "And now to affairs, my dear," she said, and accepted a cup of cocoa the Scarecrow brought.



"Billina speaks of an encroachment of the Winkie country—its colorization, at least—upon the territory of your Gillikin people. Please let me have complete details."

Ozma did so; at suitable length. She ended up saying, "The frequent and severe sand- and dust-storms are bad enough but in the long run the xanthification of everything east of Winkieland is a graver problem. I don't think we, any of us, want the whole of Oz turning yellow. But my poor fairy power is not enough—I know—I've tried—to counteract a force of nature."

"I understand," said Lurline solemnly. "Nor do I command other than fairy powers, albeit perhaps in some degree more potent than yours." She sat a while and pondered.

"There may be a way," the great fairy pronounced at last. "Fairy power can, at least, influence a force of nature to work against another force of nature." Ozma hung on her words. "My dear, do you know what 'dark matter' is?"

The Oz princess found the words suggestive but could not satisfactorily define them as an established concept. Her mentor had to explain.

"All space is dark, outside the immediate vicinity of stars—or 'suns', if you will. This is because light, which ought properly to suffuse the universe, is sucked away by countless lumps of every size—of so-called 'dark matter,' of infinite density, which hurtle through space endlessly. These lumps of dark matter—or let us call them 'lod'ms' for brevity—seem to have one dominant characteristic: they are the most powerful magnets you can imagine—or, rather, fail to imagine. Everything is drawn to them, since everything includes light, one can understand why they cannot be seen, or sensed in any way, except by their effects. And yet they populate the universe thickly."

"If that be so," Ozma could not help interjecting, "why is the Earth not constantly bombarded by them?"

"It is!" declared the Fairy Queen. "But that is another trait of lod'ms—*very* little understood, by the way. In some inexplicable way they seem to take up no space. They can pass straight through a solid body and leave no trace of their passage!"

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“You’re right,” said Ozma with a smile, “I can not picture it.”

“Dark matter has one further characteristic,” went on the queen fairy. “Over time, it would appear that very small lod’ms can indeed reach a point of satiety. Their magneticism remains great but they no longer absorb further solid matter. They become in short what would appear to be merely balls of rock of incredible density, while at their heart remains the intensely powerful grain of dark matter.”

Ozma waited.

Queen Lurline went on: “If we could harness one such it might solve your problem, your majesty.”

The implications of the magnitude of her mentor’s ability left the little Oz queen breathless.

“You would be able to influence... to direct nay, to ‘harness’! —the power of a particle of dark matter, Your Feyness?”

The Queen of the Fairies explained.

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

At about seven o'clock in the morning of June thirtieth, 1906, a giant fireball was seen moving rapidly over a region of marshy ground and impenetrable forests near the Tunguska River in north-central Siberia. Presently a thunderous crash was heard over an area two hundred miles in diameter as an enormous explosion leveled trees throughout hundreds of square kilometers of forest.

Even six hundred miles from the point of impact three or four dull thuds in succession were heard—“like artillery fire,” as one witness described it—and the atmospheric shock wave circled the earth twice. Horses and men were flung off their feet many miles away and windows were broken as far as fifty miles distant, while the water in rivers rose in huge waves. Over an area as large as the English county of Middlesex all trees were flattened: laid out like felled ten-pins, with their trunks radiating outward from the center of impact.

A huge column of fire over twelve miles high rose from the earth. It appeared to be about a mile across. In addition to trees blown down, thousands of conifers burned throughout a twenty-mile-wide area. The charred carcasses of a large herd of reindeer

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were afterwards found, but curiously there is no record of any human fatalities.

As it was early in the morning, most people were still asleep. One witness recalled how his tent was blown into the air, occupants and all. These suffered bruises and some were left unconscious, but that was the extent of their injuries.

At Vanovara trading station a man raised his axe to hoop a cask, when "the sky split in two" and flames shot up above the forest. The whole northern part of the sky appeared covered with fire. There was a bang in the sky and a mighty crash on the ground and the man was thrown down.

A plowman heard sudden bangs and his horse fell to its knees. Horses galloped off in panic, dragging plows, while others collapsed.

A washerwoman was scrubbing wool in the Kam River. She heard a noise like the fluttering of wings of a huge bird, and a great swell of water came up the river. After that came a single sharp bang, very loud. A wall of water was also driven up the Angara River.

Some carpenters heard two crashes, then after a third they fell backwards off a building they were at work on. The crashes were followed by a noise like stones falling from the sky or guns firing. The ground trembled.

Fir forests were found to have been bent over by a hot wind blowing peat from the north, so strong that it carried off loose soil and left traces of its passage on the surface of the ground.

A farmer engaged in harrowing heard a single loud report, then saw an elongated flaming object flying through the sky, the front of it much broader than the tail, and of a color like fire seen by daylight. The object was many times larger than the appearance of the sun but much dimmer and it could be looked at with the naked eye. Behind the flames trailed what looked like dust, and blue streamers from the flames were left behind. After the flaming object had disappeared the farmer heard bangs louder than gunshots and window panes were broken.

People everywhere abandoned work and crowds gathered in

the streets in terror.

On that date in 1906 the Earth was crossing the trajectory of the Beta Taurid meteor shower, which is connected with the orbit of the comet Encke. Comets consist mostly of ice with a proportion of methane and ammonia. Hence, it has been posited that the "Tunguska event" was caused by an icy cometary fragment about one hundred meters across, weighing a million tons and moving at thirty kilometers a second, or seventy thousand miles an hour.

However, despite the tremendous explosion, the shock waves, and the vast fire, there remained no impact crater. Although a large number of tiny diamonds were found strewn over the site there was no other trace of debris. A complete absence of radio-activity at the impact site would seem to indicate that the colliding object is likely to have been anti-matter annihilated on contact.

Could it have been a mini-black hole that passed through Earth and out the other side?

“Mmm,” said the queen of the Fairies, “—but not out the other side.”

Princess Ozma was crying quietly but now she looked up with a tear-stained face and said with alarm, “Not out?”

“No. As near as I can reckon—” Lurline put aside her abracadabacus and prepared to elucidate: “—the particle of dark matter is now lodged about forty miles below the surface of the earth in the southern part of the Deadly Desert, between the Winkie Country and the Kingdom of Dreams, but rather nearer the former.”

“But, oh!” cried Ozma, shocked. She had thought this interplanetary power play a strictly one-shot, temporary phenomenon: a massive geophysical twist to be accomplished one time for all and, with that, basta. “Won’t that represent an ever-present, on-going danger?”

“Why, no. Once a fragment of dark matter stabilizes in a particular location it is quite harmless. Why? did you think it will blow up or something?”

"I don't know. But if it continues to suck everything to it as it did before...?"

"But that's just what we've—well, *I've* counted on! At first I did consider shifting the Earth on its axis, so the Poles would be at the equator, and then the prevailing 'westerly' winds would change course and blow what we would think of as north-south. But then I decided that would create too many mix-ups generally. No, this way is much more elegant."

"Please explain, Your Grace."

"Well, an I said, the magnetic power of the fragment of dark matter now buried thousands of fathoms deep in the earth will remain potent. The 'fragment,' by the way, is about as big as a thumbnail. All the solid matter associated with it was atomized on impact: that's what made the big bang and fire—"

Ozma wept afresh.

"Come, my dear," said Lurline, "don't grieve too much. What's done—although undoable—could have been much worse.

"As I was saying, the lod'm will naturally continue to exercise its pull. This will involve a certain amount of suction of the earth material directly around it. We may even observe a general lowering of the desert level—oh, only by a few yards, well, say a quarter of a mile at most—on the surface of the earth above the fragment. But that tendency too will change. As the lod'm reaches its level of satiety the inward-attracted earth around it may build up in a sort of wen effect, resulting possibly in a hill visible on the (sunken) desert surface.<sup>§</sup> It will be quite interesting to keep tabs on that as the years go by.

"More important, for our purposes," the great fairy went on, "is the fact that that magnetic drag will, first and easiest of all, attract all mere winds and air currents. Winkie topsoil has already ceased to blow over eastward into the land of the Gillikins. Your

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<sup>§</sup> In fact, (at least in Alternate Oz) the result was two great rocks of surpassing density and, in themselves, great magnetic force, which dust broke the surface of the desert. See A. Volkov: *The Wooden Soldiers of Oz*. Curiously, in Alternate Oz, the excrescences are located in the desert beyond the Munchkin, rather than the Winkie, country. Editor's note.

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problem is solved.”

“Oh, I know! and I’m infinitely grateful to you, Your Grace,” exclaimed the girl ruler. “But I can’t forget those poor reindeer!” Fresh paroxysms of weeping.

“I wish you wouldn’t keep harping on that, my dear,” said Queen Lurline with a trace of acerbity. “I’ve *said* I’m sorry. I miscalculated. The ‘comet’ was supposed to have come down in a totally unpopulated region of pack ice just short of the North Pole. Let us, rather, count ourselves fortunate that the meteorite itself came to rest, finally, pretty exactly where I intended.”

“Oh, I know. But just the same, it spoils my satisfaction. I almost wish...”

“What?”

“That we hadn’t sent to Siberia to know the full extent of the disaster.”

Lurline, made of sterner stuff than the gentle little Oz queen, replied: “In the spirit of scientific enquiry one has to take the bitter with the sweet. Anyway, that wasn’t strictly my doing, was it? Admittedly, I sent word to the girls aboard *Lurline* to pick up what information they could on the way home to Burzee. They had planned to head east to collect those stragglers at New York and Macao but when they got my message a contingent transported themselves west again instead, to Vladivostok. But as you quite well know, the true close-up story of the tragedy came via those domovoys *you* sent for. They were actual eye-witnesses in own persona to what happened.”

“Yes, yes, it’s my own fault,” sobbed Ozma. “That’s what makes it worse. But I couldn’t lose any time in sending out a general invitation to displaced wee-folk everywhere to come and make their home in Oz. I hadn’t realized there were still plenty of domovoys and karliks hidden out in obscure corners of the great Russian empire. Apparently there’s quite a concentration of them in Siberia...”

“Your motivations in everything and in every respect were irreproachably kind and well-intentioned, my dear and worthy Ozma,” stated the ranking fairy queen with great dignity. “Any-



way, since you've also sent for the deer themselves to spend their post-lives in Oz, what's the loss?"

"Untimely earth-death is always sad," declared Ozma, "even if some of the sufferers do get to come to this country afterwards and live on. It is felt—and I share the feeling—that a natural full life in the great world is preferable to a 'consolation' existence in Oz."

"'Consolation' life you call it?"

"That's how I've come to think of it. As near as I can determine it only occurs in the case of individuals of great promise who die before that promise is fulfilled. I've been reading up on it in the library."

Ozma's attack of the weeps seemed to be subsiding as she got interested in describing her intellectual pursuits. "Incidentally one very quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore told how a sovereign fairy could invoke transmigration even in the case of individuals lacking any particular promise. So of course I did that in the matter of the poor reindeer. But after all, eight thousand deer suddenly transplanted to that Ice Plateau—!"

"You said you found the place totally unpopulated," returned Lurline. "Sounds like a most equitable arrangement to me."



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

The Sawhorse was harnessed and the red wagon sparkled, fresh furbished after its return from the Munchkin country and now ready for a sally into the Winkie one. Ozma was going to make a progress to the far northwest but this time with adequate preparation, not impromptu and essentially harum-scarum as last time.

After a week-long joyous reunion of Queen Lurline of All Fairies with as many of her far-flung tributaries as she had in fact ever seen gathered in one place, the great enchantress had received a royal send-off back to Burzee, where further enjoyable reunions awaited her. Fellow Queen Zurline and a bunch of the visiting ryls went along with her. The parting with Billina the hen had been particularly affecting.

But that was not before Lurline had had a farewell chat with her friend Lurline just off the *Lurline*. She found out Captain Matson's home number and put through a call via a hook-up of her two-way wrist wireless with the local San Francisco telephone system.

"Mission accomplished," the queen of fairies announced matter-of-factly to the California girl. "Everything fine here. But how

are you, my dear?"

"Oh, hunky-dory, your majesty," declared Lurline. "Lovely to see the home folks again. And of course I can't let Dorothy go—"

"Oh, yes, how is Miss Gale?" the queen remembered to ask.

"Splendid... That is, she's missing the girls in the band like mad—oh, and her friend, the hen."

"Billina? She's right here. Would Dorothy like to have a word with her?"

"Oh, boy. I know she would! Wait a second, your highness."

So Dorothy came on and talked to Billina, and then there was nothing for it but Dorothy must speak with Ozma and the two got very sentimental and Dorothy declared that it had been an awful wrench not to get to go to Oz this time, and Ozma also regretted it desperately and said that they must make some arrangement whereby the Kansas girl could come to Oz permanently and Dorothy promised that she would work on it but that it was so hard because of her aunt and uncle but naturally—

"Of course your first loyalty is to them, my dear," said Ozma. "Your loyalty to your friends is one of your most striking—and admirable traits. And now that to Miss Matson as well—"

"Yes, Lurl is fabulous!" gushed Dorothy. "She's by far my best girl friend! I don't know—oh, what am I saying?! Oh, Ozma, how stupid I am! How could I—Oh, Lurl don't look at me like that! Oh, Ozma, this is terrible! Oh, Lurl...!" The rest of Dorothy's speech was drowned in gasps and sobs.

Lurline Matson took the phone.

"Princess Ozma? This is Lurline Matson. Dorothy has told me so much about you. Poor girl, she's having a bit of a seizure. But we're not going to hold it against her, are we? Having a new friend doesn't mean there's any less room in your heart for the old—what?... Yes, exactly: that's very good: 'It just makes the heart get bigger.' I'll tell her that!... Oh, she'll get over it.

"I've got a special treat for her. We're going riding this afternoon. Yes, isn't it ridiculous?: she doesn't ride! She says in Kansas horses are for plowing, not riding around on. And she's even *got* a horse! but she never thought of riding him... Oh, it's an old cab-

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horse named Jim. But of course!: that's right, the cab-horse has been in Oz, so Dorothy claims. I guess everyone's been to Oz but me. I'd love to go but—well, we'll see. Thank you!... and I'll never forget that I have spoken with the fairy Queen of Oz."



But now the last gossamer draperies of the last sprites and pixies had fluttered into invisibility and the great green Palace of Magic echoed emptily with their absence. Ozma couldn't bear it and sought comfort in the intimacy of the little company of friends who were setting out for Cut-Out County.

Ozma drove, of course, and Lana sat beside her. The original membership of the original expedition was reconstituted, and the Scarecrow occupied the back seat with the Yellow Hen (oh—and the Wizard of Oz) while H.M. Wogglebug flew lookout overhead. Lana's now inseparable companion, Gerry the Giraffe, cantered along beside. He was getting more and more back to his old accustomed easy gait every day.

Jack Pumpkinhead and the Soldier with the Green Whiskers saw the party off. Jellia Jamb put a massive basket of cold bacon sandwiches on the floor of the back of the wagon. Some of Billina's children ran after them in the dust when the vehicle started off at a smart pace.

This time they took leisure to see everything properly: Loonville, the Ice Town. They rode the little ferry across to Kite Island and spent an afternoon flying—and, in the case of Prof. Wogglebug, even becoming!—kites. For they were not going anywhere that couldn't wait. Who knew when this particular company—if ever—would pass that way again?

Nights they spent under the paper or cloth marquees O.Z. Diggs was getting clever at erecting out of whatever magazines or scarves people happened to have along. The Jaunty Giraffe stood guard, what time he wasn't snoozing against whatever trees were tall enough and anywhere handy. He had the Scarecrow for company in wakeful moments.

The lazy days, dawdling along, seemed to inspire poetess Peethisaw to renewed heights of creativity. The Conference of Fairies at the Emerald City appeared to have made a great impression on her so that now her effusions were full of allusions to the Little Folk. Although the last of the elves and goblins had been seen in the flesh the day Queen Lurline left town, there was nothing to stop Lana from enjoying continued delight in their company in dreams. That's how it happened that she came to breakfast one morning with this creation (in lieu of newspapers) for the entertainment of her companions:

"Hello, down there.

Can you see me?

Sssshhh!

I'm hiding

'cause there's

a little elfin boy

looking for me.

He's 'it'.

And I don't want

to be 'it'

with him.

So sssshhh!

Don't tell him

I'm here.

(You can tell him

about the fairy

hiding behind

that flower though!)"

This was so well written and the Ozzish was so good that everyone gave congratulations and felicitated her on the excellent work.

Maybe they shouldn't have done that quite so declaratively because it seemed to make her muse(s) sweep particularly low over her, with the result that Lana spent the whole rest of the day, as they dogged along, with Billina the hen on her lap and a dreamy expression on her face.

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At dinner time she was able to move her companions with the following:

Please, come knock at my door.

Here I am waiting, waiting within.

Rap firm and true,

For if you knock too softly,

Though I fain would,

I may not hear.

But if you knock too loudly

I may fear,

Remembering one grim visitor

And I a tender fern

Beneath the giant's step.

Please come to my cottage.

One step will take you far.

Don't be a stranger to my gate.

With arms extended I await.

Is that a storm aloud on your brow?

Please come and see my garden!

We'll change that cloud to cleansing showers,

Trade your rain for friendly flowers

And garlands of sweet scents.

Knock, knock upon my door,

That I may welcome you inside.

And see! there is the seat I proffer,

And here the warmth of company,

And on the hearth, a gentle fire..."

Princess Ozma was so convinced of the efficacy of the measures taken by Lurline, Queen of the Fairies, to put a stop to the encroachments of the Winkie coloration upon the territory of the Gillikins that she didn't bother to follow the current color dividing line between the two lands to its end. Perhaps too, somewhere, subconsciously, she a little dreaded any further encounter with the unsavory Flatheads. Instead, she laid out a route more westerly, so that in time the party in the red wagon came in sight of the

woolen walls of the little capital city of Patch off to the southwest.

At the following crossroads they took the turning for Kuma Party. That proved to be quite a different sort of party from there own. They spent the last night of their journey there. What with the marigold wine that was served (in tulip cups) it turned out to be party-party far into the night.

You can be sure that Miss Peethisaw was a busy little person after they at length made it to her cottage in Out-Out County. She felt that she had been, all the long days of her travels with Ozma, only receiving hospitality above and beyond the call of duty and especially at the end of the trip, with those weeks at the girl ruler's capital. She had received some buffets too, of course: that tour in the dust storm, their sufferings on the ice plateau, even the inhospitality of the Swynes. Now it was time for her to offer and what she meant to offer was going to be all good.

Leaving Ozma and the Scarecrow to give Wizard Diggs a conducted tour of Honey Hill, Lana dived into her toy kitchen. Everything was little-girl-sized, but it worked. Throwing a pile of clams into a colander, she set water to boil. She got busy with milk, cream, syrup, honey, malt, and an egg beater. She put oil on to heat in the cast-iron pot and soon corn was popping sweet music.

In half an hour everything was ready. Lana went out in the garden, where Billina was having her own meal already, of a nice assortment of grubs. "These are as tasty as any I've found in Oz," commented the hen.

"I'm glad," Bald Lane. "Eat your fill. You didn't care to see Honey Hill again?"

"Since I'm not allowed to eat the bees there it would have seemed rather a feast of painted grapes."

Lana strolled on down a path lined with California poppies to where, beyond the garden gate, the Jaunty Giraffe rested, legs folded under him, beneath a spreading baobab tree. The girl sat down in the high grass beside him and leaned her back against his flank. They had no need for words.

Presently Billina followed along the path and with a cackle

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scrambled into Lana's lap. "I like it here," she said, her eyes half-lidded in drowsy contentment.

"Do you, Billina? I wish you'd stay. You know—oh, I know everything's always fixed and perfect in Cut-Out County, but just the same, I'm going to be lonely when you all go..."

Billina opened one eye speculatively and looked up. "You mean that? about staying here?"

"I do, I do." The little girl was warm in her insistence. "I have Gerry and I'm so fond of him, but for company *inside* the house..." She let her invitation remain unrearticulated. "But you'd miss the high life in the Emerald City. And it wouldn't be right to keep you out of all the Oz adventures in years to come."

"If they're going to be as much fun as this last one," clucked the hen, remembering her ten nights in a barred room, and that room floating half submerged in salt water, "I think I'd just as soon skip 'em."

So that was settled and no more needed to be said. They sat on silently, just resting... and remembering. Oh, lazy days and warm still country twilights. The high soft laughter from the quarters. The golden warmth and security of those days.

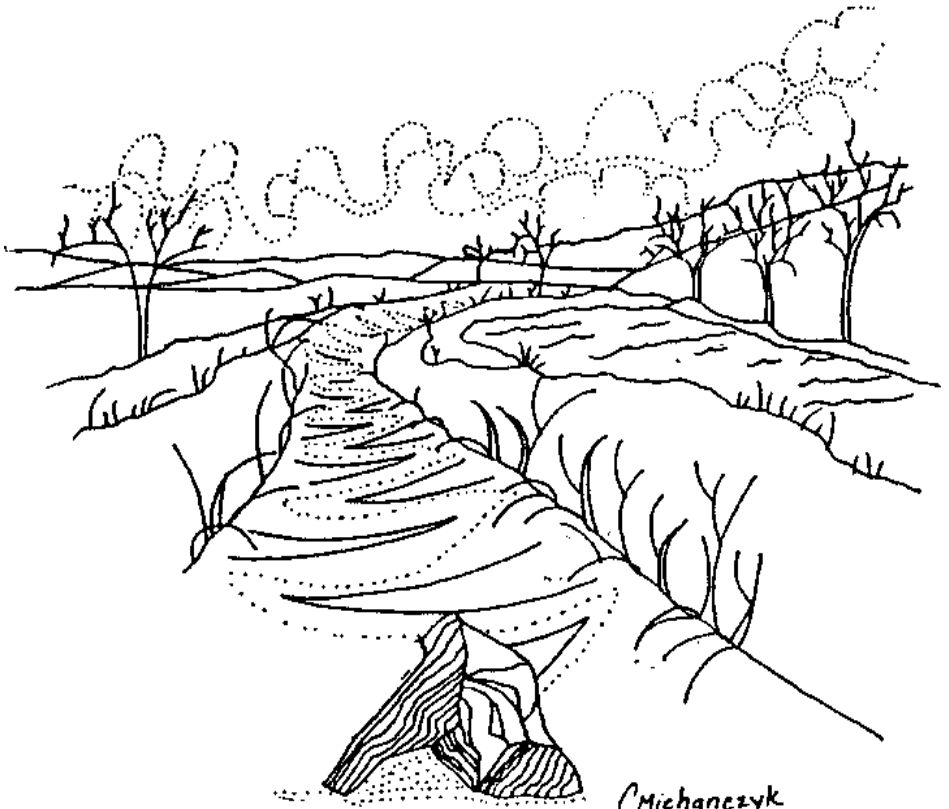
Presently Lana Peethisaw took from her apron pocket her battered old pad and pencil and she wrote:

"In the long tall green grass  
with my knees bent and the sun beating down,  
making new freckles on my nose,  
I see castles in the clouds.  
Beautiful tall enchanted castles  
with billowing flags waving in the wind.  
The wind changes the shapes of the flags  
and the castles change too,  
into a wide fluffy weeping willow,  
whose dangling branches partly hide  
a young boy talking to a butterfly.  
The butterfly flies away  
and the air from its fluttering wings  
changes the weeping willow



into a giant rose about to bloom.  
As its petals open I can see a tiny fairy  
sleeping contentedly inside.  
She opens her eyes and, seeing me,  
shyly closes the petals.  
The rose is altered to a ship  
sailing far out at sea.

I feel the gentle rolling  
of the waves of grace beneath me.  
I fall asleep and sail the ship  
into the sunset of long dreams.



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

The wogglebug with the light flimsy Scarecrow on his back had flown on ahead and Ozma and the Wizard were left to make a swift but essentially repetitive journey by red wagon on their own. As the Sawhorse raced across the miles the two passengers sped the time in beguiling talk.

The companions from whom they had just parted naturally formed the immediate topic of their conversation.

“A curious trio,” commented O.Z. Diggs at the reins. Ozma was having a well-earned rest on this journey home. “—but each one most likable in his way.”

“Yes, I’m devoted to them all,” affirmed the princess.

“But perhaps ‘curious’ was the right word,” attested the Wizard. “There was something I didn’t quite grasp. It’s—well, curious—but somehow I felt Billina was the realest of the three. The little poetess was brilliant with her art and the giraffe as jaunty and jolly as you like. But after all there was something the least bit pale pastel—about those two.”

Ozma stared. Diggs caught her silence and threw a quick glance her way. He was astonished to find her agape—as much as a

delicate princess of Oz could look agape.

"Oh, Wizard, I thought you guessed," she breathed.

"'Gussed', your majesty?" he said, flustered, knowing he'd missed something.

"Oh, O.Z., I should have spoken." Ozma was really contrite and the Wizard didn't know why. "Don't you remember? Like—well, at the phone, remember?, when Queen Lurline called San Francisco. We all had a word with the girls, you too but not Lana."

"She'd never met them," said Diggs reasonably.

"But that wasn't the reason. I didn't invite her to speak—nor did she ask. Her voice wouldn't have carried."

"Not carried?" echoed the Wizard, acting awfully dense.

"Yes, little Lana can never have any personal contact with the outside world. On the other hand, she fits in beautifully in Oz—because she can never die."

Finally, the Wizard got it. "I see. Because she has already."

Ozma gave a little crooning sound of assent. Then they were silent.

"May I know?" said Diggs presently. "The circumstances?"

"Of course." Ozma settled herself, half turned aside to speak toward the Wizard's ear. "I heard of it during those two bleak days in the derelict house. I'm afraid it didn't make the time any jollier for us, but I think it was a relief for the little girl to speak of it to someone..."

O.Z. broke in. "But Lana's a Winkie! and Winkies *don't* die."

"Of course when these individuals come to Oz, they appear as natives. That's the way it works! Certainly it makes their life here easier. But didn't you notice? Lana says 'Yiss' not 'Yes.' She's a little New Zealand girl."

"New Zealand!" exclaimed the Wizard. "I wondered at the accent—and one or two turns of phrase."

"She had leukemia. Her death was long, drawn-out and agonizing. I believe her parents were completely devastated by the loss. Lana had a little sister but it was herself, so young and gifted and full of charm, in whom the hopes of the family rested. Now, as I can learn—I'm new at this, Wizard. Remember it's just five

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years and a bit since I came to the throne. There's still so much to find out!—but as far as I can discover it is only, in the case of human beings, those who *can* expect to come to Oz who can expect to come to Oz.

“That sounds like a conundrum, doesn't it? What I mean to say is this: that apparently only persons who know about Oz come here; those who believe in it and those who actually wish for it. Now it appears that during those long sad weeks Lana's mother read to her the English classics and then at the town library she discovered others: American books. At once the little girl loved the tales of Oz and I gather they were the very last thing in her mind when the time came. That's the way it happens...”

“But Gerry then? the young giraffe. Is he—?”

“Yes, the same thing. The story is equally distressing. Of course Gerry hadn't read any Oz books! But the thing occurs in the same way with regard to animals: promising, and cut off before their time.

“Gerry had been at a small zoo in southern England only a few weeks but was—he modestly confessed—already the favorite of the crowds. Intelligent and frisky and not shy with the public. They called him even then the 'jaunty giraffe.'

“Then one morning he tried to leap a shallow dividing ditch: never a wise thing for a giraffe to do, but he was young and inexperienced—and alone at the zoo, with none of his own kind about to serve as models for behavior. He leapt, and the ground was wet and he slipped—and came down spraddled, the four legs splayed out in the four directions. He couldn't fall any further and he couldn't scramble up. The young giraffe was trapped by his own legs.

“The zoo folk, who were devoted to him, were distraught, but what could they do? Nobody thought quickly enough or they might have brought a construction crane from a distance, but that would have had to be by railway and the zoo was not near the line. They had to stand there and watch him die by inches, silently, struggling to raise himself... until his strength gave out. And all the zoo public looking on: it was right inside the perim-

eter fence—until the authorities had grace enough to close off the road until it should be over...

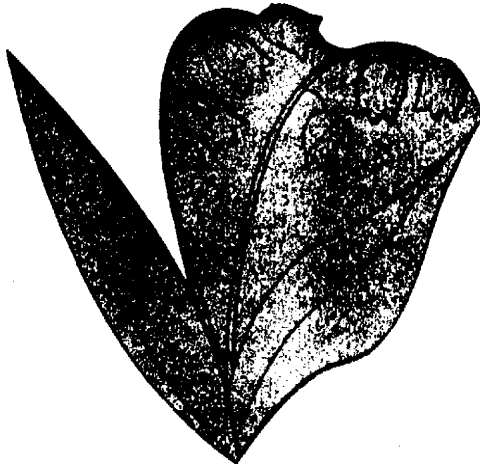
“And so Gerry same to Oz.”

“His awkward gait, at first,” said O.Z. Diggs. “I wondered about that.”

“Yes,” said Ozma.

Let’s leave them there: speeding onward to the green city far away where it is never too late for dreams to be made real.

Meanwhile, in another part of Oz, a little girl and her giraffe still play along the road and over the hill where the sun is always high but the air is cool.



Workington, Cumbria, 17 August 1988  
Lund, 9 May 1989