
Chapter Thirteen

The Ohio tots, properly contrite, would of course not leave Bettina Butterfly's hospital bedside until she was off the critical list. There she hung, both wings in traction, and just moaned slightly now and then. Lurabelle Ladybird in nurse's cap and protective green gown buzzed about, coddling the patient.

Thus had the travelers found them when, proceeding of necessity more slowly on the ferry, they had finally come ashore in blue Munchkinland and the swift Sawhorse had whirled them to the steps of the Royal College. Registrar Fex had reassured them that the patient had been rushed into intensive care the moment Mme. Swan had deposited her on the roof of the (newly reconstructed in miniature) college infirmary. Prof. Wogglebug and the chief of the Medical School met them at the doors of the casualty ward.

"How is she, doctor?" spoke Nick Chopper earnestly.

"She'll live," assured that worthy. Of course, this being Oz, that had not been in doubt but the anxious party needed to know more. Bettina wasn't going to be an invalid?! She would re-emerge as the gracious raspberry-pink flutterby they knew of old? "It's touch and go," admitted the physician.

The party passed to Bettina's bedside and silently Jimmy laid on the counterpane a bouquet of tiny forgetmenots the children

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had gathered on their way up from the river. Some thought they saw the invalid smile and no one reflected that Jimmy was perhaps that one in all the world Bettina most might like to forget.

The worried friends took up the bedside vigil but of course no one stayed there twenty-four hours a day. Other matters also claimed attention. For one thing, there was the ever-present problem of feeding.

"Are you hungry, my friends?" asked Professor Wogglebug as they sat on blue velvet couches in the college library, to which several of the visitors had adjourned after the first call at the sick-room.

"Yes," said Sarah. "I want to eat supper."

"Me too," said Jimmy. "I like to eat." He could say that again.

"They haven't had anything since we left my tower house," informed the Scarecrow.

"And it was a long day's travel," added the Tin Woodman, not mentioning the emotional stresses that might also be supposed to contribute to appetite.

"Then be my guests at once!" exclaimed the professor cordially. He reached into his waistcoat pocket and took out a small tin box. Twisting off the lid he offered of the contents to Jimmy and Sarah.

"Candies!" cried Sarah and took a handful of pretty pink pills with a pattern of purple polka dots.

"Oh, just one, my dear!" cried the wogglebug in some alarm.

The children stared. Unpractised in social graces themselves, they were very much alert to failures of heartiness in others. Was this over-size bug going to turn out to be a skinflint?

Just to assert his rights as a guest Jimmy grabbed three of the capsules and swallowed them.

"Oh, dear," said the professor. "It wasn't to be stingy! Perhaps I should have warned you in advance. These lozenges are my own invention. They are the 'seven-course dinner pills'. A single capsule provides a full meal. Have one, my dear, do." Again he offered the tin to Sarah and indulged, himself. Return-

ing to Jimmy, "You've had twenty-one courses," he said. "I do hope—"

"I can taste bread and butter!" interrupted Jimmy, "and chicken soup."

"Yeah!" cried Sarah delighted, "and mashed potatoes! and peppermint ice cream."

The wogglebug too was enjoying. "The breaded pork chops are delicious," he declared. "Tender and not at all dry. And the salad is crisp: just the way I prefer it."

"I like this corn on the cob," said Jimmy. "Not sure about that asparagus though. And—oh, wrap!—broccoli; I can't stand it. Oh, well, that's better: fruit cake and rum sauce—"

"I'm full," announced Sarah. "Thanks, Prof; that was an okay supper."

The wogglebug, finishing off with a demi-tasse and a Viennese chocolate, was also replete.

But Jimmy went on: "More soup?: mulligatawny this time, and roast beef and succotash and corn bread. Snow peas, oysters on the half shell—I don't like those shells very much... Ugh, I don't feel so good."

Sarah, Professor Wogglebug, the Scarecrow and Nick Chopper looked concerned. (Jack Pumpkinhead couldn't, being in attendance just now at the bedside.) The boy started looking around him a bit anxiously.

"Bacon sandwiches, tomato aspic, chili con carne, plum pudding." Abruptly he got up from the couch, holding his belly. "Where's the crapper?" he cried.

But the worthy professor was not learned in American street slang and failed to reply immediately.

"Butterscotch pudding!" exclaimed Jimmy and stared wildly about. "Braised parsnips!" He ran toward the tall library windows. "Sweet and sour spareribs!" He clambered up on the radiator. "Clam chowder!" croaked Jimmy, fumbling with the latch. Not a moment too soon he flung the window wide. "Cookies!" he shrieked. And forthwith tossed them.

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

Professor H.M. Wogglebug came often to visit the children at Bettina Butterfly's bedside. There were long and ample hours to discuss their problem. While the pumpkins spoiled in the back of the red wagon and the ears of corn grew ever more dessicated, they rehashed the situation. Both Jack Pumpkinhead and the Scarecrow had given the savant accounts of Jimmy and Sarah's journey to Oz and he had heard it as well from their own lips. The Scarecrow was even now with them as Wogglebug polished his spectacles with care.

"There's no doubt about it, in my view," declared the highly magnified and thoroughly educated Professor Wogglebug. "After impartial consideration of the various stories of your translation to Oz, I deduce that you got here by... *magic*." He brought out the stunner with a flourish.

The children cheered and applauded. Then, "We figured that out long ago," announced Sarah. "The question is: what kind of magic?"

"The only kind of magic they have in America is scientific," asserted the Scarecrow. "They do wonderful things with machines and technology there."

"They have another kind of magic too, Scarecrow," reminded the wogglebug, who had done graduate studies in

the United States^s and knew whereof he spoke. “The magic of imagination. However, I don’t think that’s the way the children reached here, not this time anyway.”

“Why don’t you ask us? just to be sure,” offered Sarah pertly.

“All right,” agreed the professor. “Sarah and Jimmy, we others are not just imagining that you are here with us, are we?”

“No,” said Sarah and ““ Course not!” scoffed her sibling.

“And *you* are not simply imagining a like state of affairs, are you?” queried the great bug in order to be quite positive.

Jimmy didn’t bother to answer but Sarah murmured “No” again.

“I didn’t think so,” confessed H.M.

“Our uncle,” hedged Sarah, “did tell us we could go to Oz any time we liked, but he said we had to pretend. Only we’re *not* pretending. Are we?” Sarah looked to her brother for confirmation.

Jimmy just rolled his eyes and looked resigned at all this tramping around in the obvious.

“Well,” summed up Prof. Wogglebug, “I’m all at sixes and sevens. I can’t make it out. Logically you shouldn’t be here; you *can’t* be here. On the other hand, you are.” He supported his proboscis on a feeler tip and pondered. “Who might know? who might have some inkling as to what— Ah! I have it! My esteemed colleague, Oscar Diggs, Wizard of Oz, would surely know. May I suggest—”

“The Wizard?” queried Jimmy. “You mean that old geezer with the bald head that hangs around Ozma?”

This description scarcely tallied with everybody’s laundered conception of what Wizard Diggs was like but they couldn’t help realizing who was meant by Jimmy, who was going on: “If *he* had a clue about how we got here he would have said some’n while we were with him.”

Sarah was always a little fairer than Jimmy. After all, her blonde crew cut was eight shades lighter than the chestnut locks of her brother. She inserted: “You know, Jimmy, we didn’t actu-

§ See *The Ten Woodmen of Oz*. Editor’s note.

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ally talk about this at Ozma's. We were too busy checking out whether people who weren't in the movie really existed. I guess a whole lot of them do," she ended with a resigned sigh.

"I recommend," pursued the wogglebug, "that we all go to seek out the worthy Wizard and ask for his view of this extraordinary phenomenon.

"Oh, you too?" wondered Jimmy. "Well, I guess we can cram you in the wagon somewhere."

"For a need," hmfed the insect educator, miffed, "I can fly." He had been intrigued by the mystery and now wanted to plumb its depths even despite rebuffs.

Of these there was a sufficiency. "Oh, okay," agreed Jimmy, "'cause we'll want room in the wagon for those other bugs. I guess the butterfly won't be able to fly right away when she first gets out."

"Let's go see how she's doing, Jimmy." And taking her brother's hand Sarah pushed through the swing doors back into the invalid ward.

C H A P T E R

F I F T E E N

The next afternoon Bettina was taken off the critical list and four days later the lepidopt was declared well enough to be released into the tender care of her friends

“You still got your pill box, prof?” asked Jimmy. “We’ll put her in that.” Somehow he couldn’t seem to get away from thinking of Bettina as a collection specimen rather than a living breathing person in her own right with her own dreams and aspirations. In the end a little gossamer swing was rigged up just behind the front seats in the red wagon and there the butterfly perched, her new-healed wings gingerly folded, as the carriage rode away on its journey.

The kids had casually dumped all the rotten pumpkins and dried-out corn ears on the college lawn and then announced with satisfaction: “There, Wogglebug, there’s a seat for you after all.” It was really nice of them. The farm produce had only been a pretend excuse in an emergency anyway; Ozma didn’t want all that junk; and they abandoned it with complacency. Registrar Fex stood looking after the departing wagon and thinking that if the University had been granted those pumpkins a week ago they might have made nice pies for serving at High Table. Possibly the maize might still be used for seed.

The party departed but Oz itself hadn’t shrunk and the way

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from the Royal College to the Emerald City was just as long as it had always been, which was a hundred times longer for the tiny travelers than it had been in the days when you could cover the distance, behind the swift Sawhorse, in an hour. He strained his powers to the utmost but still it was long past midnight before the group reached the city gates.

Twilight had replaced daylight and then night took the place of dusk. Fireflies blinked in the trees. A full moon rose over Oz, looking enormous to the enmidgeted travelers. On whizzed the red wagon by its silvery light. The motion of the dashing vehicle jostled to sleep everybody that *could* sleep—and on it flew.

At about three o' clock the Scarecrow gently nudged the sleeping children awake. "Stop it!" mumbled the pair and moved aside by reflex from the soft fumbling glove hands. So the Scarecrow and Jack Pumpkinhead and the Tin Woodman and Professor Wogglebug had to enjoy the spectacle of the moonlit green towers and turrets on their own. Nor did they disturb the sleeping ladybug or butterfly.

The bejeweled walls of the city sparkled like green fire in the crystal moonlight. The City of Emeralds looked just as wonderful as these old denizens had always known it, even if the stately buildings only made up a ghost city now. All life there went on at no higher than curbstone level.

The Sawhorse's lightning run ended at the miniature guardhouse built at the foot of the one formerly used. Yawning and stretching, the Guardian of the Gates came out to check the travelers' credentials. For this it was necessary that, all sleepers be stirred awake.

With whines and burpings Jimmy and Sarah sat up and looked about them. "Oh, futch!" cursed Jimmy. "Why the heck didn't you wake us?! We wanted to see the approach to the big city." Sarah also registered a complaint.

Glumly they stared at the round-faced official who, last of all the citizens of the Emerald City, still wore big green goggles. When he didn't also wear handlebar moustaches or look like Frank Morgan the children denounced him for an imposter. Nick

Chopper shushed them embarrassedly and signaled for the Sawhorse to pull on, while Professor Wogglebug tried to distract the young visitors by pointing up to a horseshoe-shaped object mounted at the peak of the gate archway.

"That's the famous Love Magnet," the pedant said with reverence. "It was given to the city by the Shaggy Man. Perhaps you know about him?"

"Yeah, there was something about him in the books. Some crummy old tramp, wasn't it?" vouchsafed Jimmy.

"He wasn't in the movie," declared Sarah disapprovingly.

"Anyway he gave it," related the professor. "It hangs over these gates so that all who enter here may be loved and lovable."

"Big deal," grunted Jimmy, still not recovered from his untimely wee-hours waking. Professor W. thought that if anybody might profit from the influence of the Magnet it should be these two.

Not long afterwards the wagon rattled in over the cobblestones in the inner courtyard of the new Palace of Magic.

The Soldier with the Green Whiskers, roused, came out to do the honors of the off-hours reception of the arrivals. He helped the sleepy girl and boy descend from the carriage as Prof. Wogglebug carefully gathered up the butterfly invalid's swing sling and the Tin Woodman managed to get Lurabelle Ladybug transferred to the tip of a tin finger. Then they all entered the palace, while Omby Amby accompanied the valiant Sawhorse to the stables for a well-earned surcease of labors.

Wasn't it quiet in the faintly moon-luminous green halls! Just for the heck of it Jimmy, finally thoroughly awake, let out a Calgary yell. Sarah tittered delightedly but the others looked shocked. It wasn't long before startled exclamations were heard from behind bedroom doors, one or two heads were poked out, and lady slippers were heard coming tapping along in agitation.

It was Jellia Jamb in a dressing gown. She had come tumbling down from the servants' gallery to see who dared thus to

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disturb the repose of august Ozma and her court. When she saw Jimmy she couldn't believe so much noise had come from one little boy. She had been going to scold—in a deferential way, of course—but when she saw it was a child, well, that made it all right. Children could do no wrong and Jimmy was still far from the age when he would graduate to drugs, switchblades, and general delinquency.

The pretty serving maid gave a hand to each and said: "I'll show you to your room. Two beautiful beds for the dearest little boy and girl in the world." And you know?: there was no irony in her speech!

The tots stared sulkily. What was this? a gag? They both started to say something smart-aleck. Then suddenly they didn't.

This too was the beginning of wisdom. The kind green maiden was too nice to sass.

C H A P T E R

S I X T E E N

Jimmy and Sarah had had a very late night but I had had an early one, and hence an early morning. I was rendezvousing quietly with the Wizard at the car port, where we boarded one of the Scalawagons: a king-size one, as we were not traveling *à deux*. No, various ones had got wind of our expedition and requested to come along. Historians Baum, Thompson, and Neill had no interest in sticking in the lounge and reading Oz books. They seemed to know them by heart already! Nor were any of them games enthusiasts, no matter what they may have been in younger days. They didn't care about croquet or tiddlywinks.

Then of course Princess Dorothy never knowingly got left out of any excursion, so she was there. Finally, Scraps the Patchwork Girl declared that we needed more females to average out the sexes. She wanted to bring along Billina the Yellow Hen to make it really four of each but at the last moment the doughty fowl couldn't be found.

Of course we said nothing to Princess Ozma about our intentions. In matters connected with the "Smelly Room" she 'didn't want to know'. But we left word with General Omby Amby in case the girl ruler should ask after us.

Away we bowled out of the city. The new fleet of mini-Scalawagons was equipped with all the latest technology so all

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we had to do was set the controls at “auto” and plug in “Pink Palace” on the destination panel. We could look around and enjoy the morning-fresh countryside without automotive pre-occupations.

We were still bouncing over cobblemeralds on our way to the south gate when the Patchwork Girl opened the conversation by saying:

“You know, I had no way of knowing,
So just one question: where we going?”

“Oh, Scraps, you’re incorrigible,” Dorothy pretended to sigh. “We’re off to see Witch Glinda.” In her merry morning mood she seemed to fit her second sentence to the tune from the film.

“Which Glinda’?” echoed Scraps.

“There’s only one,” said Dot insouciantly. “Tell her, Wizard dear.”

“We want to wind up Tik-Tok,” explained the savant willingly enough, “—and by the least magic means possible. We don’t want to seem to be going against our ruler’s decision to adapt to the new miniature state of things without a lot of hedging and recourse to magic. We thought Glinda might have some ideas.”

“Whadda ya wanna wind him for?” asked Scraps. “He’s way too big—forevermore!”

“But that’s just it. We need somebody out-size for a project we have in mind.” Mr. Diggs told the interested company all about the scheme to cure the stench in the Old Palace side chamber by cleaning and airing the carpet. “The Mechanical Man, at his size, could do that easily.”

“Yeah, the old (big) clothes lines are still up in the laundry courtyard,” reminded the Patchwork Girl and recalled, sheepishly, an occasion when she herself had hung there for a time^s. “I can show him where the rug-beater paddles are kept.”

“Fine,” we applauded. But I myself had a codicil:

“You know, Professor,” I said, “as much as a cleaning that old rug needs a repair job. I couldn’t believe how threadbare it

§ See “The Woozy’s Sticky End” in *In Other Lands Than Oz*. Editor’s note.

looked—and still in use in a Palace apartment! What would have worn it out like that?”

“I can’t think,” said Diggs, but I noticed he looked somewhat abashed, somewhat awkward. “It was still fresh-looking the last time the room was used, but that was years and years ago.”

“It’s funny,” I said. “Of course all the apartments in the Old Palace are a bit dusty by now. But in that room the dust seemed to lie thicker than anywhere else, and especially on the floor. No wonder, really, that it smelt pretty badly fusty. But there was something more: it was as if the carpet itself had—how shall I say.: decomposed. The dust looked like the powdered remnants of the rug itself...”

“Queer,” everyone agreed. Thus encouraged I enlarged on the theme. “I wonder if some kind of microscopic organisms: weevils or mites or something, could have attacked it?”

“Or mice!” suggested Dorothy suddenly. “Remember how Queen Ramina’s clan devoured the flying carpet in the adventure of the Yellow Fog^s?”

“No, my dear!” said Wizard Diggs in, this time, no hesitant terms. “At least we’ve been able to keep the old building rodent-free.”

“Anyway,” I reverted, “it would help a lot if at the same time as Tik-Tok gave the rug a beating he could somehow get it repaired too... But I don’t suppose he’s much of a sewer—”

“I think you must mean ‘needleman’, my friend,” put in Miss Thompson drolly.

“Or ‘seamster’,” Dorothy capped her mot. “A member of the Seamsters’ Union.”

“But joking aside,” I pursued. “If it’s even to survive a beating that rug needs a—”

“Patch!” cried Scraps and sat bolt upright in her seat and stared at me with her suspender-button eyes wide.

“Oh, more than a patch,” I countered. “An entire reweaving, for preference—”

§ See *Yellow Fog Over Oz*. Editor’s note.

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“No, Patch, the place!” exclaimed the girl of rags. “My kingdom,” she added modestly and lapel-polished her cotton finger tips. “They have charge of all Palace sewing. That’s since *way* back.”

“Yes, of course,” I recalled, with *The Gnome King of Oz* fresh in mind. We had been talking of it only lately—oh, when? “I believe the reigning queen is Mistress Susan—”

“Susan Smiggs!” cried the Patchwork Girl. “Of course as Queen she spells herself ‘Sewsan’: short for ‘Sews and Smiggs’. I forget exactly what smigging is. Anyway I had a letter from her just the other week. She used to do all the palace mending here but now that she has assumed the royal dignity in Patch we send all our fabric-repair work there to be done.”

“I see,” I replied, catching the implications at once. “Tik-Tok would want to carry the carpet to Patch right off, probably without risking a dry-cleaning job on it first. Well, that would be quite in order,” I pursued, thinking that to get the smelly old rug away from the Emerald City would be a plus in itself, no matter what disposition of the artifact might be made later.

“I’ll go along!” declared Scraps, now in nostalgic mood. “It’s time I paid my old kingdom a visit and saw how things are getting on. It’s been—heavens!” She counted on her cotton fingers and mentioned a startling number of years, if not quite the seventy-three since she had reigned there herself.

I turned in my seat to address myself to the Patchwork Girl more directly. She was sitting next to Miss Thompson and I could distribute my bouquets equally between them. “I’ve wanted to say, ladies,” I began, “that I admire the opening of the saga of the Patch succession as the equal of any sequence in the canon for sheer ozziness.”

The ladies simpered, one for having lived the events, the other for recording them.

“Ozziness,” put in the Wizard. “We all recognize it but what is it really?”

“Drollness,” stated Mr. Baum at once, and if anyone ought to know, surely it was he.

“Drollness’!?” we all cried and clamored to know more.

“Yes,” said the genial author, comfortably lighting up a pseudo-cigar (it tasted like fine Havana but made no smoke to bother the rest of us). “As you can picture, I’ve had time here to think over what I was up to when I penned the stories of Oz.” He leaned marginally closer to his fascinated hearers and blew out to one side a cloud of non-smoke. “My idea when I wrote *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was to present a funny queer odd country—something on the order of Carroll’s Wonderland but lighter, jollier, not so threatening. As with Wonderland there was no idea of making it a *fairyland*, per se.”

That set us back a notch or two, as you can imagine. “Not fairy!” I dared to cry. “But what about Princess Ozma?!, always described as a fairy, or, at least, part. And—and Queen Lurline and her magicification of Oz? And—er...”

How peculiar. I couldn’t think of any particular fairies in Oz! And you had to have fairies to have a fairyland, didn’t you?

Baum smiled knowingly. “There, you see? No fairies to speak of. And the fairy queen’s enchantment of Oz was an afterthought—when demands began to be expressed as to the why and how of everything. In the first book I didn’t bother.”

“Didn’t bother explaining the marvels?” interpreted Mr. Neill.

“Exactly. I had the Scarecrow being alive but never troubled to tell how. I had the Woodman lopping off his extremities with apparently no debilitating loss of blood. I had animals that talked and trees that fought and china figures that moved, and nowhere a word of how it all came to be. And the amusing part was that the public accepted it so and loved it. They wanted the drollness. They really didn’t care how it got like that.”

We were all set musing and mazing.

“And it’s gone on that way. It’s drollness that is the keynote. That’s Ozziness,” summed up the Royal Historian.

“But magic,” I gasped. “There’s certainly no scarcity of magic in Oz. Why, it even gets into the title of one of your books. So you must have felt—”

“Oh, sure, magic,” Mr. Baum agreed. “But if you’ll notice,

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it's almost never *fairy* magic. It's witches and magicians and sorcerers who bring that off. Despite the much-referred-to film even the *good* witches of North and South are not presented in the books in fairy apparition but rather the one as a kindly grandmotherly type and the other as a stately chatelaine."

"So Oz is a *magic* land but not specifically a fairyland," summed up Miss Thompson.

"Just so. The one word 'magic' sufficed to account for all the kookinesses—as our friend here would have it." The Historian waved a graceful cigar in my direction. "Who perpetrated the magic was in many cases left unsaid."

Miss Thompson and I looked at each other and winked. We'd both spent books and books explaining away drollnesses that our great mentor had blithely set down as Ozzy effects without causes. After all, it was the effects that counted. The causes were secondary.

And yet... Man is a reasoning animal. He doesn't only want to know what. He wants to know why. The Baum books largely, the Thompson tales in part, told what. It was left to me to go round examining structural strains and explaining why/how. I like to think my jottings filed a need.

But sales figures probably demonstrated which sort of writing was the more appreciated.

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

“Braaawkwk! Wake up, sleepyhead!”

Jimmy and Sarah opened their eyes and sat up. There, perched at the foot of Sarah’s bed, was a plump yellow hen wearing a pearl necklace.

“Billina!” cried Sarah.

“Good morning, Billina,” said Jimmy politely.

“Good morning to you both,” cackled the hen. “I told Jellia Jamb I’d make sure you two were up before she comes in to help you dress. How did you sleep?”

“Fine,” said Jimmy.

“Me too,” said Sarah.

Jellia Jamb entered pushing a serving cart. She greeted the children and drew aside the green draperies. Sunlight poured in through the windows.

“My, it’s a lovely day,” she said. “You’ve slept late so I’ve brought you breakfast here. The others have already eaten.”

“Do we have to eat pills?” wondered Sarah.

“Like the wogglebug gave us?” added Jimmy somewhat fearfully.

“Goodness, no!” exclaimed Jellia. “So you’ve tried those, have you? The professor’s pills may be useful in a pinch but here in the Palace meals are prepared with real food. But before you eat

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you must get dressed. The royal laundress has washed and pressed your clothes for you."

"I can dress myself," boasted Jimmy. "But Sarah may need a little help."

"Yes," confessed Sarah.

Soon the children were sitting down at a table just their size. Jellia served them eggs and oatmeal and hot chocolate, a dull menu perhaps but welcome after the culinary excess they had lately been a party to. After all, to paraphrase Thornton Wilder: Our stomachs are not strong enough to thrill every moment. At least Jimmy's wasn't.

As the tots ate the yellow hen perched on a chair back and entertained them with an account of her own presence in the Emerald City. "I roosted under one of these beds last night. What a surprise to hear you stumbling in in the middle of the night. But Jellia there gave me the story in a few well chosen words."

"Where are your children?" Sarah wanted to know.

"What children?" clucked Billina in surprise. "I gave up turning out eggs years ago. Let other generations get on with that job. I'm visiting my great-great-great-great-grandchildren, as long as I'm here for the centenary celebrations anyway. By the way, I've got somebody I want you to meet."

"Oh, who's that?" said Jimmy with his mouth full.

"Mastication first, conversation afterwards," preached the hen.

"Oh, all right!" gulped the boy gracelessly but did shut up while he chewed.

"It's the young lady I live with," related Billina. "She and Gerry the Giraffe and I came down together for the festivities."

"'Young lady'!?" guffawed the not yet completely regenerated Jimmy. "We don't need any young ladies! — anyway, more than Jellia here," he amended loyally.

"Well, 'little girl'," amended the hen in her turn. "She's just five — has been for quite some time. She'll be a nice playmate for you."

"I want to meet her," announced Sarah in certain terms.

So after breakfast that's what they did. They found Lana Peethisaw sliding down the Grand Staircase bannisters. As soon as she landed hugs were exchanged all round.

"May we join you?" add Sarah and giggled at her own unwonted formality. But actually, it was kinda fun calling Lana "Miss Peethisaw" and talking like grownups. I think it was then that Sarah began to realize that childishness is only engaging as long as it is not deliberate, whereas deliberately grown-up behavior can be charming.

"I usually do this with the Patchwork Girl," related Lana. "She's nice about letting me slide off the newel and fall on her for protection. But I couldn't find her this morning."

"Oh, she's gone off with the Wizard and them to call on the Witch of the South," informed Jellia while keeping a careful eye on the tots' sport.

"Well, twit!" yelled Jimmy, stopping his play abruptly and thrusting hands on hips. "The Wizard was supposed to tell us about our magic... translation" (he'd decided he liked that curious usage) "to Oz. *Now* how'll we find out?"

"Let's see," pondered Jellia, taking the boy's complaint as a legitimate problem. "Who might know about something like that? What about Professor Wogglebug that came here with you? He's awfully learned. I saw him in the palace library when I was dusting there."

"Aw, heck, Jell," said Jimmy, quite amiably for him, "He's the one that advised us to ask the Wizard."

"Well." Jellia cogitated further. She didn't want to bother the Queen, who was dealing with the day's mail in her office, about what was after all a kiddie question. Nor did she like to dismiss the children's concern as of no importance. "Princess Dorothy might have some ideas but she's gone off too with the party to see Sorceress Glinda. But maybe you'd like to ask Dorothy's aunt and uncle?"

"What would they know about it?" said Jimmy sulkily but Sarah took Jellia Jamb's hand and said, "Don't bother about him. Sure, Jellia, let's go see them." She shyly gave her other hand to

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“Miss Peethisaw”.

As they left the grand staircase to follow the broad echoing jade-and-peridot North Hall the parlor maid spied two shapes ahead. “Would you like to ride?” she enquired playfully. It was the Courageous Lion and the Hungry Tiger!

Children always like to go for rides, of course, so the trio did not demur. “We’ve met them before,” informed Jimmy, remembering the time he’d tried to enlist the King of Beasts as a draft animal for their trip to call on Jack Pumpkinhead. But Rex greeted them with grave courtesy and the tiger growled recognizantly.

Jellia carried on with her friendly little scheme. “I wonder, King Rex,” she said, “would you like to take the children for a ride? We’re just stepping out to visit Princess Dorothy’s aunt and uncle.”

“It could be arranged,” conceded the monarch.

“Oh, good!” cried Sarah. “I know how. I ride my doggie Bleue sometimes. Come on, Lana.” And the two little girls were assisted up onto the broad tawny back of the lion.

“Do you want to ride me, Jimmy?” asked the Hungry Tiger.

“Sure,” said Jimmy and without any time-consuming thank-yous he climbed aboard.

Soon the party had left the palace and crossed the courtyard along which were ranged the royal stables. They called a greeting to the Sawhorse and Woozy, those long-time pals. Hank the mule and Jim the cab-horse clopped their hoofs in salutation and Jimmy was reminded of how he intended to cultivate the acquaintance of his namesake—but not just now. The group passed on into the palace gardens.

In a pause in conversation the Hungry Tiger said, “This walk is giving me quite an appetite. Pity you lot aren’t younger. I’m particularly partial to fat babies.”

Sarah and Lana shuddered and seemed about to cry but Jellia declared insouciantly, “He doesn’t mean a word of it! At least... he’s never been *known* to consume a baby. Have you, Hung?”

“That’d be telling,” purred the tiger but he did not pursue

the topic. Perhaps he only meant to ginger up the small fry.

But now the formal gardens gave way to cold-frames and vegetable beds and at the end of long rows of cauliflowers and eggplants the strollers spied a neat little farmhouse. An elderly man was sitting on the front porch whittling.

"Hello, uncle!" called Jellia Jamb from a distance. The old fellow looked up. He was wearing overalls and a flannel shirt. He didn't look much like Charley Grapewin but the newcomers were prepared to overlook that. "At last!" breathed Sarah, relieved. "Somebody else from the movie. I'm sure he's real all right."

The children slid off their steeds' backs and trotted forward to give Uncle Henry the conventional hugs. Actually the old farmer was from a period when hugs *weren't* all that conventional and he was a bit clumsy. Still, you had to follow along with the times and he didn't want to get a reputation for being an old fogey. To cover his embarrassment he called "Em!" into the house.

A serious-faced woman in a calico dress presently appeared in the doorway, wiping her arms in her apron. When they were tidy she folded them across her chest and said, "So these are the little ones, are they?" Somehow nobody essayed to give Aunt Em hugs.

After introductions had been made the farm woman covered any possible awkwardnesses by saying, "I've just put a pan of batter biscuits in the oven. I'll bet you could sample a little something, couldn't you?"

Jimmy looked at Sarah. After all, it was a whole hour since breakfast. "Yes, ma'am," said Sarah. She actually said 'ma'am'.

"I've heard you're great eaters," Em confided. The Ohioans looked a bit flat. But then, they seemed to reason, it was better to be celebrated as trencherpeople than not known for anything at all. The two didn't really have many distinguishing character traits. Their rudeness and self-interest were not features they actively wished to be known by.

When it came right down to it the party all settled around

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the kitchen table and ate, biscuits and honey, fried sausages, hominy, and stewed tomatoes. With coffee there were ginger snaps also just crisp from the oven. Sarah looked at Jimmy a bit anxiously as he grabbed a cookie in each hand, but it seemed that he was in a fair way to not throwing up at all after this hors de serie meal.

Nor were the animals forgotten in the general feeding. Those sausages were Uncle's own home-spun ones and the bones and the hide from the slaughtering were in the outbuilding fridge. He slung some of the former on a tray and served it up on the porch. The great cats growled in appreciation.

It turned out to be Lana Peethisaw who first mentioned the purpose of their visit. She having come to Oz in an exceptional way herself, she was interested in off-beat manners of 'translation' and she was almost as concerned as the newcomers to discover how they had managed to parlay a dandelion wish into an actual descent on the fairyland.

"Yeah," Jimmy carried on the enquête, "we thought Dorothy might have some ideas. She's come here so many different ways herself. Anyway that's what the books say. But, rats, she's not here to ask."

"That's right. Dorothy went off this morning with the Wizard and them to see Miz Glinda. I forget what about," told Aunt Em.

"We never knew, Em," said Henry, taking his postprandial pipe out and lighting up. He *was* old-fashioned. The children coughed pointedly but he puffed on. "Our niece just dashed in for a minute to let us know she was going. She hardly said where, let alone why."

"Off to the Witch of the South," muttered Sarah, tending to sulk, "without inviting us along."

"Why, darlings," said peacemaker Jellia, "you were sound asleep after already exhausting travels. Mr. Diggs and the others could hardly expect you'd want to be off again."

"Why, that's the most natural thing in the world!" protested Aunt Em, setting down her coffee cup. "Of course the young

folks want to be off—back home! Aren't you worried about getting back, Sarah? When our Dorothy was first blown here that was her main concern."

Jimmy answered breezily for his sister, "Oh, Ozma can send us back home with her magic belt any time."

"Well, I reckon that's right," admitted the farm-wife with a last napkin dab at her lips before getting up and to work again. "But what about your folks? Don't you know they're anxious about you? I fretted something awful all the time Dorothy was gone."

Jimmy swallowed, then secured refills for hands and mouth. "Gee, I never thought about that. Our uncle will think we fell down a well or something. Oh, heck, Sarah, I guess we better tell Ozma to send us back home."

"All right," muttered Sarah. She was concentrating on licking ginger-snap crumbs from around her tiny mouth with a little pink tongue—before placing new ones there.

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

“Try this dewberry jelly,” urged the distinguished Sorceress of the South.

Not all the eating was being done by the children from Ohio. We others were getting our share of goodies as we sat around the table in Glinda’s intimate breakfast (well, brunch) nook. Gravely ‘Mr.’ Glinda, Sples Smith, went round with the pot of Greek mountain tea again. Some of us were spiking it with a soupçon of triple-sec.

“And now to your affair,” proposed the Good Witch in continuation. “Normal-sized people to give a hand to wind up Tik-Tok, you say? Well, of course there are none of those left in Oz. You’ll have to go outside the country for a start, that’s clear.”

“Yes, I thought of someone from Ev or Ix, your grace,” stated Wizard Diggs. “Those lands naturally remained unaffected by the miniaturization spell that was cast over Oz. But I haven’t made any move in that direction. Couldn’t decide, for a start, just who to invite: in fact, whom to dare to trouble ‘to make the long laborious trek over the desert and the intervening territories just to give seven twists of the wrist—”

“Not to mention the dirt they’d track in after such a hike,” reminded Glinda. We all sighed in concern at the thought of the poor dingy outside world where everything was grey with filth,

ranging to outright black in Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and large parts of China.

"Aren't there any clean people left in the world outside Oz?" demanded the spades-spades-calling Patchwork Girl.

"Oh, indoors it's not that bad," I reassured. "We manage to keep quite tidy with four or five showers a day. And when we go outdoors we keep well covered up, from hair to toes, and, not to forget, our air masks on. Have to anyway, you see, on account of ultra-violet, now that they've blown our ozone cover."

"Ozma and I," contributed Dorothy, "remembered to protect ourselves by magic means when we did our trip to the outside world. And most of the people who joined us weren't too—well, soiled. But weren't those Ohio children grubby!"

I recalled with sympathy how delighted the tots had been to throw away their masks when they discovered the air in Oz was breathable. As for their dingy clothes, perhaps that didn't matter so much when they were just going to be bowling along in the red wagon.

"It is too bad," put in Miss Thompson, "that we didn't know in time or those children could have wound up the Mechanical Man before they got reduced in size.

"Regrets, however..." summed up the Wizard, implying that such were of little functional use. "Right now we need practical advice. If only there was a simple way to summon somebody of the right size just for a few minutes—"

"There's always the Phase Plates," mentioned Glinda half doubtfully.

"Phase Plates!!" Diggs slapped his forehead. "Of course! How stupid of me not to think of them myself—and at once! We've imposed on Your Grace quite needlessly."

"Not at all," demurred the Sorceress. "It's been a pleasure I've looked forward to: meeting these distinguished arrivals." Here she looked round at the circle of Royal Historians. Then, "Shall we invoke my set of plates?"

The Wizard had thought quickly, now that he'd begun. "Well, no, your highness. I think not. The point is: it's in the Palace of

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Magic we need the visitor's help. If somebody from Alternate Oz turns up *here* he's still have the trip all the way to the Emerald City. Better to do it there."

"Quite so. Will you be off then immediately? It's been such a fast turn-around. You would be so welcome—"

O.Z. Diggs broke off the Good Witch, *most* courteously, and scarcely ten minutes later we were racing north again.

I should explain that communications, nay actual transport, between the various alternative manifestations of the land of Oz had been a regular practice for quite some time. It was to the eternal honor of the wizard Wam in Munchkinland, working in tandem with the clever artisans from "Russian Oz", Lester and his assistants, that means had been perfected for moving entities among the divers planes, or "phases", of the fairyland through the agency of sets of two great upright sheets of ozyinium impregnated with thaumaturgon. The court at the Emerald City had one such set of "phase plates" established in the Wizard's laboratory. Witch Glinda had another; so did Wammupirovocuck; and, I think, one or other authorized adepts of magic in Oz.

It appeared that when a body, be it a person or an object, was introduced in the space between the two parallel-standing plates of ozyinium and the proper levers and gears were engaged, that body was forthwith transported to the corresponding space between plates at the location to which the sender plates were tuned in. The devices worked rather like a fax transmitter except that it wasn't a facsimile or copy of the original which was sent but rather the thing itself. Also, the mechanism only served to convey entities from one alternate-universe plane to another. It had no effect at all if one ventured to try to transport objects between points within the *same* physical world. Thus, in the case of Oz, people could travel to the Emerald City we know from Volkovian Oz or from any of the other Ozzes by phase plates but not from, e.g., Mo. For that you'd need an old-fashioned flying machine or sand-boat or transportation wish.

Once more back in the capital we all trailed along with the

Wizard to his tower workshops, agog to see the show. The Soldier with the Green Whiskers met us at the south door and accompanied us. He regretted that Princess Ozma could not be alerted as to our arrival. She would surely have liked to witness the attempt which our leader indicated as being in the offing. But she herself had gone off a-jaunting.

“Never mind, general,” the Wizard consoled. “This is a little project for our dear ruler’s benefit but one she prefers to remain just a bit in the dark about.” And with that cryptic comment Omby Amby had to be content.

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

Back at the royal stables Jimmy and Sarah gave a great hug round the neck to each of the big felines. This action represented acknowledgment of the animals' amiability in providing them transportation to the farmhouse, as it would never do merely crudely to thank them. They also hugged Lana Peethisaw as they said goodbye and transferred to her the hairs that had collected on them out of the lion's mane.

When Jellia Jamb saw the condition of their faces and clothes by now she thought a wash and brush-up would be in order. After all, the kids had been grimy when they arrived in Oz a week before: that was the price you paid for living in the great world and daring to run through meadows in the bare outdoors. Nor had the confirmed old bachelors they'd been traveling with since then thought of anything so mundane as threatening them with baths. The children had, of themselves, washed their hands and faces at various times, and, now it occurred to Jellia Jamb that they ought to do it again.

To please their charming friend they agreed. Then they lay down on their beds for a rest before lunch. Inadvertently they fell asleep but resolved to keep it a secret from their friends that they had done a thing so babyish as to take a nap. They sat up with a start when there was a knock on the door and managed

to jump off the beds before the knock was repeated and they called, "Come in."

Surprise! It was Jellia, carrying a tray with a jug of steaming water, two fluffy white towels, and a cake of green soap.

"Say, what IS this?" demanded Jimmy in his frequent stance of hands on hips. "We've already washed once today."

"Never mind, sweetheart," cooed Jellia. "You're having lunch with Princess Ozma, so you want to be especially neat and tidy."

"Why don't you just shove us under the shower," sulked Sarah, "and be done with it?"

"Oh, darling," cried the green maiden, wounded. "I could never be so cruel!"

Seeing it was Jellia, the children let themselves be mollified. Even so, before she left the room the maid said, "If you ever did want to, the bathroom, with tub and shower, is the next door along." But she managed to have the room door behind her before a pillow hit it.

Sarah and Jimmy dampened the towels, wiped their shoes in them to simulate face dirt, and were ready to go.

Out on the landing Jellia had begun to strike a gong announcing that the midday meal was about to be served. Gaily the children ran past her, slid down the bannisters, and landed at the foot of the Grand Staircase where all the celebrated personages of the Court of Oz were standing about sipping cocktails (tomato juice)—at least, all those who could swallow.

Then the tots were busy, and confusion mounted, as they moved about hugging the Scarecrow, Jack Pumpkinhead, the Tin Woodman (with caution this time), Professor Wogglebug, the Shaggy Man, Lana Peethisaw again, Billina the hen, and Princess Dorothy's dog and cat. Presently the crowd trailed after the green maid to the great dining hall.

After they had found their places Queen Ozma entered by another door: a vision in emerald satin and lace. To the muted but enthusiastic cheers of the diners she was led to her seat at the head of the long table by General Omby Amby Battles.

"Welcome, dear friends," greeted the Queen, standing at her

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place. "I hope you are all happy and well. We are privileged today to have two special guests visiting us. Jellia dear, would you please introduce them to us?"

"This is Jimmy and this is Sarah," said the maid as she paused in ladling out the madrilene and pointed with the dipper.

The children smiled and waved.

"I think," continued Ozma, "that they have already met everyone here..."

"We want to know how we got here!" broke in Jimmy impetuously.

"Why, the Magic Belt..." said Ozma, taken by surprise.

"No, *we* wished ourselves here," asserted the Ohio boy. "We just don't understand how it worked."

"I see," said the queen, corrected. "Well, we will pursue the matter after lunch. We don't want our food to get cold."

Jellia Jamb and several serving men and maids, all dressed in green, brought course after delicious course to the table, where each morsel was eaten with relish: two sorts, onion, and mango chutney.

When the dessert dishes (mint chocolate pudding!) had been cleared away Ozma announced that they would adjourn to her throne room.

The entire group proceeded down the corridor to the Royal Throne Room and Audience Chamber. The Girl Ruler seated herself on her throne and General Battles took up a position next to her on the dais. The others all sat on gilded chairs grouped in a comfortable semi-circle. When everyone was settled Ozma asked to have retold the facts concerning the arrival of Jimmy and Sarah.

Jack Pumpkinhead told what he knew of their coming. Then Jimmy and Sarah repeated as much as they knew. "We just wished on a dandelion and blew the seeds," said Jimmy. "It looked like it was snowing there were so many seeds. When they all settled we found we were in a different field. Then we saw all of you—and went to you."

Ozma had been listening intently. Her brow was furrowed

in thought. After several moments of silence she spoke.

“That dandelion must really have been magic,” she said. “I know that magic dandelions do not grow naturally in America. I deduce that the dandelion must have grown from a magic seed. But where did that seed come from? Obviously not from Ohio. From Oz? But to my knowledge, though we do have dandelions in Oz, in the country of the Winkies, none of them are magic. None of them have the power to grant wishes. I’ll check my books but I am certain there is no such thing as a magic dandelion. That means that the flower, or the seed from which it grew, must have been enchanted. Yet such an enchantment could not have been placed on a plant already growing in Jimmy’s field. Hence the seed must have been bewitched before it arrived there and grew into a flower.”

Everyone murmured and nodded in agreement with the little fairy’s conclusion.

“If that is so, then we must discover who was responsible for the enchantment and why the spell was cast,” said the queen. “Let us consult the Magic Picture.”

Jellia Jamb drew aside the heavy green velvet drape from a nearby section of wall and revealed a pleasant painting of an Ozian landscape.

Ozma approached the picture. She raised her hands and made a magical sign. “Show me,” she intoned, “the one who is responsible for the enchantment of the magic dandelion seed.”

Jimmy and Sarah watched in wonder as the Magic Picture began to blur, the colors running into one another in rainbow swirls. The many hues combined until they became black. The entire canvas remained black for several seconds. Ozma looked perplexed. Then the black again became swirls of color which soon reassembled into the shapes of the beautiful landscape once more.

“Hmmm,” mused the Princess. “The picture only showed blackness. That implies that the one responsible for the enchantment no longer exists.”

“Perhaps it was one of the Wicked Witches of Oz,” suggested

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the Scarecrow. "But which one? Of the East? the West? Or even old Mombi might be the one."

"You may be right, Scarecrow," said Ozma. "Our only chance of solving this mystery may lie with Glinda the Good, our wise adviser. The answer may be recorded in her great Book of Records. I think we should pay a visit to the famous Sorceress."

After that the gathering broke up in some confusion. "What is all this?" said a Thompson nephew to "Uncle" Billy Hammer. "We were right there when Ozma wished the kids to Oz. What kind of mystification is the Princess pulling off?"

"I'm confused too," admitted the inventor. "I almost had the idea Ozma was going to say she personally had done the trick, when the boy interrupted her. But she must have something well thought-out in mind. I kinda wish there was going to be room for me in the red wagon."

However, when that vehicle pulled out twenty minutes later the available seats were filled by Jimmy and Sarah, their great confidante Jellia Jamb, the Scarecrow, Lana Peethisaw, and Billina the hen, while the sprightly fairy Princess of Oz herself was at the reins.

C H A P T E R

T W E N T Y

The wondrous Phase Plates in the Wizard's laboratory, despite their—to us—imposing size, were of course vastly too tiny to allow of any person of (still) normal dimensions from Alternate Oz having a place between them, should any be so ill-starred as to be victims of such an attempt. At most an Alternate-Ozian fly or bee might fit in there with some comfort, though none such would be likely to be invited to make the trip.

Someone did propose that Lurabelle Ladybird's alter ego from Volkoz be sent for. Her we might deal with quite comfortably, she being of almost exactly matching size with most of us. The proposal was typical of the confused thinking that always seemed to attend these dealings in the one-to-a-hundred ratio. What use to us would be a ladybug as big as we were?

What was wanted was for our own Miss Lurabelle to go to Alternate Oz! and there to tell them what we had in mind. But there again: what role in the alternate-plane country could be played by a ladybug just one hundredth of the size of coccinellidae that normally crawled about there?

"Might as well—nay, much better—" quoth the Wizard, "send our directive by alternate—phase wireless."

And that was what he proceeded to do.

Our miniature Plates were hooked up to the normal-sized

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(that is to say, the, to us, most vast) ones in Diggs' former workshop in the Old Palace. When he keyed his message to Alternate Oz it first flashed across the fields to the standard-size transmitter and thence to the land of its destination. As with our own plates (both sets) a brilliant orange light would flash there to attract the attention of whatever technician might be on duty in the Other Oz capital and alert him/her that communication was desired.

Soon Mr. Diggs (oh, no, "Professor" in the laboratory) was chatting comfortably with Master Craftsman Lester across the void in Volkov Oz (sometimes called "Volkoz", mostly in fun). After leisurely amiabilities had been exchanged, "Chief," said Diggs, "would one of your people have time to—er, step across and assist us with a small trifle?" He explained the circumstances.

"The Mechanical Man," repeated Lester. "Of course: I remember him well. This running down that way *is* a stumbling block, isn't it? As I see it, even when we do get him wound up, one of us will have to go along wherever he goes, to wind him up again when he again runs down. In that case we might as well do, ourselves, the job you want him for."

"Oh, no, out of the question:" demurred the Wizard and with numerous expressions of regard he insisted that we wouldn't dream of asking a guest to lug a heavy carpet on his back all the way from the Emerald City to the kingdom of Patch. Nor was there any question of anyone's being able to drive the distance.

"Well, never mind. We'll have a look when we get there," reassured Lester. "All right if I bring along one or two of my assistants?"

"Oh, you'll come yourself chief?" exclaimed the Wizard in (perhaps mock) surprise. "That will be quite splendid"

"Now here's how we have plotted the logistics..." And Prof. Diggs explained how the most practical thing would be for all parties to gather at the motionless figure of the great copper man in the foyer of the Old Palace of Magic. "You can find your way down all right from the tower apartments?"

Oh, yes, Lester didn't think they'd have any trouble about that.

Then things moved quickly. There was no reason to hang around. As we passed back down through the palace word was again bandied about that the dear Queen had herself gone off on a visit and to our own so lately visited good Sorceress of the South. Something to do with some of the throng of current guests of the court: oh, yes, the two captivating tots from Ohio.

Well, we didn't need them in what our particular little detachment of outer-world guests was up to. Furthermore it was by now gospel to us all that Queen Ozma didn't care to know about developments having to do with the Stinky Room. We trailed along outdoors and across the vast lawns toward the Old Palace.

Lester, truly, had not 'hung around'. We found him with Tik-Tok's key in his hand, and the copper man himself bowed and did the honors of introduction.

"My dear Wiz-ard" he creaked. His voice was a bit rusty—well, corroded—after a year and a half of silence. "What a pleasure to see you a-gain. Well, al-most see. You're so ti-ny! Les-ter here has been tell-ing me what hap-pen'd just be-fore I ran down. I hav-en't quite ab-sorb'd it yet."

Nevertheless Tik-Tok had his wits about him enough to present Craftsmen Koboble, Prenneret, and Eqqi (the latter a *craftswoman*) and, of the other party, the minuscule Messrs Diggs and Baum and Mlles Dorothy and Scraps. The rest of us were strangers to him.

"Have a look here, professor," put in the looming Lester to the wee Wizard of our Oz. "We just happen to have with us one or two little contrivances that might come in useful now."

The Volkozite slung from his shoulder his plumber's sack and spilled out right on the marble floor of the stately entrance hall such items as metal-cutters, wrenches, hinges, spring levers, a bale of wire, a blowtorch, and some small clockwork mechanisms. Small to him perhaps; they reared above our heads and we were careful not to come too near lest domestic trag-

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edics intervene.

“My, my,” said the Wizard. “That will you do with those?” He had to holler this speech through a megaphone which he had thoughtfully brought along, in order to reach Lester’s eardrums.

“Since your call,” explained the Alternate-Oz technician, “I took a moment to think over the problem. It seemed to me that Smith and Tinker didn’t go far enough when they devised their mechanical man^s. Surely, for maximum efficiency, Tik-Tok should be *self-winding*. His dependence on others to insert and turn his key must be regarded as a severe limitation. Now what if we were to perfect the patent-holders’ inspiration?”

“Oh, fascinating,” approved Diggs. “How do you propose to go about it?”

Actually it did not surprise many of us that Engineer Lester deemed there to be no time, or place, like the present. Subject of course to the copper man’s own approval of the scheme, he requested Tik-Tok to lie down on the wide slick lobby floor. The mechanical man’s spherical body (not the most appropriate to the purpose, in Lester’s opinion) tended to roll from side to side but one of the Volkozites went to a nearby-apartment and returned with a couple of footstools which they propped, for blocks, against the metal man’s torso.

“There will have to be certain incisions made,” Lester explained to the patient. “Will you require anesthetic?”

“Oh, I think not, doc-tor—er, mech-an-ic,” replied Tik-Tok. “I feel of course. I am pro-gramm’d to do ev-ry-thing but live. But I do not feel ve-ry a-cute-ly. Things touch-ing, e-ven scrap-ing, my ex-ter-i-or seem to re-gis-ter as a tick-ling sen-sa-tion. I be-lieve I’ll risk it.”

So said, the surgery took place. Some of us turned away our gaze as two of the technicianas, using what looked like enormously sturdy can-openers, peeled away the copper skin from Tik-Tok’s upper back in a great rectangle. All his entrails—that is to say, works—lay revealed. But the absence of blood enabled

§ See *Tik-Tok of Oz*. Editor’s note.

us to get through the trauma all right.

Lester actually poked his head inside Tik-Tok's round body and had a dekko. It was not many moments before he possessed a full grasp of the working of the copper wiring. Then it was not long before the said wiring had been rerouted to find its source of activation in the copper man's foot (the right one), where more work with the metal-clippers opened a small square aperture, within which were placed a trip-lever and a small dynamo.

In the course of an hour and fifteen minutes the patient's back had been neatly soldered up again and his entire integument given a buffing with an electric currycomb of hardest vanadium-steel so he shone more resplendent in orange-brown than he had done for years. "How do you feel?" asked the chief surgeon.

"Top hole," punned the sufferer, employing a Britishism. "At least for a while there I did."

"Do you think you could stand up?" pursued Lester.

"Yes, in-deed." And Tik-Tok suited deed to word.

"But," he reported after some moments of gingerly testing of his limbs, "it feels as if I'm tread-ing on some-thing with my right foot. Almost as if I'm step-ping on a spring."

"You are," confirmed the mechanic. "It's virtually the same as the principle of a self-winding watch, except that you yourself supply the motion that keeps the mainspring wound. Every time you tread on your right foot you give the works an additional small impulse. Just keep walking and you'll never run down. In fact, I should say that you are now become an efficient perpetual-motion machine."

Tik-Tok sighed in appreciation. Such a transformation was perhaps as far as a mechanical man could ever go toward an apotheosis. Needless to say he was keen to begin walking at once.

"And we have just the assignment for you!" confirmed Wizard Diggs. "Master Lester has already described for you in broad outline what the problem is? Could you think of walking to Patch to carry out a project of dry-cleaning and mending?"

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“It sounds a fitting challenge,” asserted Tik-Tok. “When had you thought I should begin?”

“Well, again,” replied Diggs, “no time like the present. Will you step to a location we will point out to you?” He gestured down the hall in the direction of the Smelly Room. “But a word of caution: perhaps you would prefer to switch off your olfactory mechanism for the time being...”