was not told exactly what those concerns were.

It seemed that Cheecheecheepip numbered among his acquaintances in former times the powerful Witches of both West and East. When the monkey king described, as detailed here in a former chapter, his tribe's thralldom to the Magic Cap, he had been, as usual, not quite candid. Or perhaps it was only the raconteur's art that made him elide the account of how the fabulous charm fell into the possession of the Witch of the West. Preciously guarded magic implements do not fall from the ownership of a protected prince in the remote highlands of the Gillikin Country into the possession of a distinctly dingy witch far away in the middle of the yellow land of the Winkies. There was a definite sequence of linkages.

First Quelala, the cap's first owner, told his wife he really had no use for the talisman and gave it back to her. She, in turn, had no wish to look upon the detested simians again and she certainly did not wish to be beholden to them for any services rendered. She had enough magic at her command to carry out any conjuring she wanted done. She threw the (actually quite hideous: taste had changed radically already in the short time since she had had it made) Golden Cap into a cupboard.

Then one day the powerful Witch of the East came for a visit. Gayelette was not so good nor so snobbish that she declined to consort with other influential sorceresses even if they were unattractive to look at or had a reputation for being wicked. The eastern witch Gingemma was highly intelligent, even if perhaps (and ultimately to her cost) not very sensitive socially or psychologically. It pleased Gayelette to converse with her on matters of statecraft or about the arcane arts.

Then if such a visitor brought rare gifts of charms and spells which were new to the Gillikin sorceress and would be fun to play with, Gayelette could do no less than

respond with one or two trinkets Gingemma might right find amusing. She turned out her magic "lumber"-closet and came across the Golden Cap.

"Here, Ging," she said, "have this! It once cost me half my kingdom—but I don't care for it anymore. But I think you'll enjoy its powers."

"Half your kingdom?" said Gingemma, walking around with her teacup (extremely strong tea!) and saucer in her hands. "How so?"

"Oh, it didn't really," confessed Gayelette. "That's merely the story I have out—so as to make it seem a more appealing present to Quel. But apparently he didn't care much for it anyway. I can't say that I blame him—now."

"It is pretty tacky, isn't it?" Even frumpy old Gingemma could see that, as she put down the cup and saucer and turned the cap round in her hands. "What was supposed to be so costly about it?"

"Oh, those diamonds and rubies—and the gold thread. But of course I made them myself, with magic, in half an hour."

"And the powers associated with it? What are they?" Gingemma wanted to know.

"That's a spell I laid on it afterwards," related the Gillikin sorceress. "There was a tiresome incident with some monkeys... I hate monkeys, don't you?"

"Oh. I can take monkeys or leave them alone," said Gingemma mildly. "Why do you hate them?"

"I've tried to analyze that for myself. I think it's because they're such a travesty of human beings. All ugly human features are exaggerated in simians: flat noses, terribly long lips, arms that are far too long too, and black skin where it isn't a dreadfully brilliant red! as on the posteriors of one species."

"Chimpanzees have cute small ears—sometimes!" excepted Gingemma thoughtfully.

"I'll give them that," admitted Gayelette. "But then all that hair! Why couldn't they have nice soft pettable fur, like koalas or pandas, instead of all that nasty long hair?!"

Gingemma had no answer for that one. However, she was willing to accept the Winged-Monkey-controlling amulet—when first she had been told what its capabilities were. "That will come in very handy," she said, with reference to one of her own current projects—without, however, enlarging to Gayelette on what the project was.

Thus the magic Golden Cap passed to the Witch of the East, and when she had used up her three wishes she sent the cap along to her sister, the Witch of the West, who then employed it to cause all that trouble for Dorothy Gale and her friends. Something of this Cheecheecheepip related to Mombi as they sat in conference in the witch's kitchen.

"But," said he, having established his credentials, "now to affairs. I and my tribe have been free now for some time from the cursed spell. My mills may grind slowly but they grind exceedingly small. The time has come for revenge on the wretched Gayelette. Will you assist me?"

Mombi was too clever to at once fall in with the monkey's vengeful schemes. She played hard to get, although of course secretly delighted to be invited to wreak mischief on any other sorceress. As potential rivals all such were hateful to her and it didn't matter to her that she had never met—or, strangely enough, even heard of (but then Tresgaie was a remote and small place)—Gayelette. "What's it worth to you?" asked she.

"For starters," said Cheecheecheepip, dropping the chancellery style, "these." He motioned to the little marmoset, who clambered up on his lap and opened the attaché case on the kitchen table.

"I made it my business," admitted the king of the monkeys slyly, "while in the service of the two witches to—shall we say?—borrow one or two charms and amulets.

These I offer freely in exchange for your help in—er, removing the obnoxious Gayelette."

Mombi had cast an expert's eye over the contents of the case. "Trumpery gew-gaws," pronounced she. "You think I'd trouble myself to put some remote witch out of commission for *those*?"

Inducement number one had failed. Cheecheecheepip went on to inducement number two. "Oh, you mistake me, good madam! *These* are but an earnest of my honorable intentions." (Back to the chancellery manner again; it did seem to work best.) "These are but a gift! Or you might say that they are a down payment—or even a coupon—which you may turn in for a bigger prize elsewhere.

"I understand you perfectly, you see," he went on, "that we are two shrewd dealers, neither of whom has any foregone inclination to trust the other. I by no means expect you to do my business on a vague promise of reward *afterwards*. On the other hand—let us be frank—I do not repose total confidence in you to carry out what you may promise if you have received your—honorarium in advance. The present small token is a middle way."

"Implying—?" said Mombi skeptically.

"I have arranged," said Cheecheecheepip, "for an acquaintance of mine, the Wizard Wam—you may know him?—to meet you after you have carried out your commission with the Gayelette woman. Wam will be in disguise, of course—this affair is not of the up-and-up caliber he prefers to deal in. But he's a good man and will do much for the sake of an ancient friendship.

"He will meet you in a cave—" Here the king of the monkeys passed Mombi an address. "—conveniently on your return route from Tresgaie, you see. And there you may turn over these trumpery gew-gaws for other—and more numerous—charms and spells of an altogether different order. You may test them in Wam's presence."

"Will they be useful for transformations?" inquired Mombi eagerly. This was her specialty, and in her time she had brought off some spectacular transmogrifications throughout the length and breadth of the land: turning girls into boys, pumpkins into coaches, princes into frogs—and vice-versa—and night into day, during many long years.

"Eminently," replied Cheecheecheepip.

Mombi did not need to be persuaded further. She closed with him. Next day she set out on her travels.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Twenty-five years was long enough.

When Princess Gayelette had been missing that long, Prince Regent Quelala decided it was time to proclaim the succession of Prince Gay-Lala, the son of the missing Princess and himself. Gay-Lala was forty by now, and looked it. Unlike his father, who had halted his aging at about twenty-three, Gay-Lala went on to older man's estate and presented that anomaly curiously rarely seen in Oz: a child who appeared older than its parent. He probably had some idea of looking the part of the responsible ruler he aspired to be, and his father Quelala didn't mind: he'd always been more interested in other things than the power and panoply of regency anyway.

Crown Prince Gay-Lala dropped the "crown" from his name as he put it on his head and with great pomp and ceremony ascended the throne of his ancestors.

That left "Dowager" Prince Quelala at a loose end—but not for long. If his dear wife was—well, not "dead," of course—but "gone" enough to be no longer the ruling Princess of all Tresgaie, she could reasonably also be assumed no longer to fill the role of "wife." Let us not think the worst of Prince Quelala; it is, however, just possible that this aspect of the matter lay at the heart of the regent's decision to declare the throne vacant.

He was always thinking, you see, of pretty Miss Dayna down in Unnikegwick. Yes, by now the orange state had declared itself free[6] and had become a republic, the only one of any size in Oz, under the "protection" of the mercurial engineer and fantast Till Orangespiegel. Those were great days for orangemen—who were not long in assuming a national appellation of "Unnikegs." From every corner of Oz everything orange (that could move) was gravitating to what was felt as a long-longed-for mother country. Quelala with his orange hair and eyelashes was

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6 See THE MAGIC MIRROR OF OZ. Editor's note.

naturally, from the first, a great favorite among the more conspicuous of the immigrants though of course, in his case, "immigration" was only periodic.

Now, with son Gay-Lala on Tresgaie's throne and wife Gayelette nowhere to be seen, what was to prevent the ex-regent from moving to Thobdibnub bag and baggage? (To bring Dayna to Tresgaie would, Quelala thought—honoring his wife's memory—be a little tactless.)

Gay-Lala was delighted when he heard the news—but quickly shifted his features to register affection and regret. He would miss his dad frightfully (he *said*) and sent at once for the entire staff of the palace to help the old gentleman pack.

Under the patronage of the foreign royalty restaurateur Gwullbullion, Dayna's father, had long since given up café-keeping and was now something on the local city council at Thobdibnub. He still sang bass, however, whenever the windows flew open and the townspeople leaned out to harmonize in chorus. Dayna's brother took over café (and upstairs inn rooms), the Ball and Chain, so that that venue for business was not lacking.

It was to the Ball and Chain that Quelala would repair whenever he came to town. Soon Dayna would join him there and nothing would be lacking to their connubial bliss except just the name. This time, however, the stay was of some minutes only. Word had naturally been sent ahead of what was envisaged and the whole Gwullbullion family had been scouring the town and environs to find a little palace that would suit.

The very thing turned up in a small side street, the former residence of a refugee Grand Duke, which had lately been doing duty as a kindergarten. They cleared all the kiddies out to more modern and suitable classrooms and redecorated from top to bottom.

Next came the wedding. The happy couple waited

impatiently for the necessary document to come from Tresgaie: an embossed and wax-sealed scroll stating that, by edict of Prince Gay-Lala, the very much lamented Princess Gayelette officially no longer existed. Hastily a marriage license was obtained and at fairly short notice, but withal sufficiently grandly, the nearlyweds were completely wed in the banqueting room of their own residence. Now Quelala could start raising a second family—if he cared for such things.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

An Oz book may not be quite the place to describe the most dreadful thing in the world. But what would you? That which DesPlessis d'Arc saw in the crater of the high snow cone, though awful, was an absolutely natural and imperative concomitant of one of the most charming and desirable characteristics of the fairyland of Oz.

Now think what it might be that he was horrified witness to. Leaving aside all petty considerations of sex or religion, what is the most dreadful thing you can imagine?... Reflect a minute...

Well, that's what he saw. And is it any wonder the young man was sickened and turned away and retched? The guck couldn't retch but he had gone all jelly-like again, despite the cold, and it quivered violently. Even so, it tried to make soothing noises to its new friend and (already) master.

When his malaise had passed Fritz experienced only the classical modes of pity and terror. Controlling these, he leaned over the crater rim again and took a further look.

Filling the shallow, roughly circular, crater of what was shaped like an extinct volcano, a gently heaving parti-colored pink and brown surface of flesh, perhaps half a mile in diameter, was presented to the youth's view. It was a living organism! but quite obviously "no man," nor yet identifiably other-animal either. It was abominable all right. So would any creature be which had too many arms (and even armless hands) and paws and claws, a plethora of legs both naked and furred (yet without being able to walk anywhere), and a plentiful show of heads of various ages and sexes, both human and animal. The continual low moaning that came from the few heads "fortunate" enough to have vocal cords attached added to the pitifulness. And despite the refrigerator cold a faint whiff of slow disintegration did undeniably now and then escape from the direction of the organism.

What in the world was it? Fritz asked himself. *And how did it come there?* Answer came there none.

Then as he watched, a small black speck in the distant sky drew nearer and presently, as it landed on the far opposite rim of the crater, revealed itself to be what looked for all the world like a monkey with wings! It appeared to take something from a large satchel it carried, and pitch it into the crater. Fritz was too far away to make out what it was. Then the monkey flew away.

Fritz looked at the guck queryingly but the latter only shrugged (*can* gumdrops shrug?). It was at just about this time that a purpose came to Fritz d'Arc, who had been feeling uncomfortably aimless in his wanderings so far. Whatever else happened and regardless of what other goals he might acquire, the American would try now to get away somehow, return to civilization, fetch explosives, and return to detonate and put out of its misery the loathsome and abject creature in the pit!

But that was a row whose hoeing would be long-drawn. First there was the problem of even budging from where he clung. He had said he did not wish to retrace the two-day route he had followed in getting where he was. That determination held firm. With the sea in sight, so tantalizingly far below, he would stake all on trying to get down to it.

How? The only foothold forward was the teetery rim of the crater and he could see how, on ahead, it narrowed to a thinness that ruled out his negotiating it. Some way further he might scramble, and he did that.

It was enough. About two hundred and fifty yards along (including one dicey stretch where he literally had to hang on by his fingernails and edge along, lying against the steeply angled crater wall) he came to where the ice cream cone presented an almost unbroken, horrifyingly steep, but smooth slope downward. Just on the brink of it was a little

"platform," perhaps eight yards square, where they could rest and gasp.

The sticky old guck was sticky to its hero. Somehow it (he?) had also managed to make its way along the knife edge, perhaps by dint of sticking. It saw in a glance Fritz's predicament and it grew excited.

"Me got you've to kick!" it commanded. (But rendering the guck's fractured English is tedious for both reader and writer; we'll translate its further talk into standard language.)

"Kick you?" asked Fritz, surprised. "I wouldn't do that, old man." (Fritz too seemed to "receive" the guck as more male than female.)

"Yes! Kick me! Hard as you can!"

"No." Fritz rejected such behavior point blank. In just a few hours of feeling of being comrades in arms had developed between the two unlikely companions. Comradeship ruled out the possibility of kicks.

"Please! It can't hurt." Here the guck propped itself against a bit of the crater edge, converted a leg to an arm and hand, and pinched off a bit of its own substance. He offered it to Fritz, who put up an offending hand.

"No, thanks. My teeth still hurt."

The guck shrugged again (I guess gucks can shrug). But its point had been made. It dropped the detached handful of near-crystallized jelly on the ground, where it bounced, sprouted feet, and ran around squealing in a near-aural-threshold shrill voice.

"See?" said the 'parent' guck. "But I can't pull myself in half. Not enough leverage. Kick me! hard as you can. Or jump on me; that'll do as well." Here the guck flopped incontinently upon the "ground" of frozen custard.

d'Arc decided he'd be advised to do as bid. Still with misgivings he "recoiled to jump better," then launched himself, finny feet first, upon the rotund shape of the guck.

To the young man's surprise his feet in their frogman flippers seemed to sink through the gumdrop substance of the guck as through soft butter or heavy whipped cream. By the time the feet had touched "bottom" below, the guck had bifurcated at the break and the two halves jumped lively to their feet and ran around frenetically shrieking in high-pitched unintelligible voices.

One of the many (frankly, incredible) characteristics of the guck's (or gucks') nature was that as the pieces multiplied, becoming progressively smaller, they also became less and less capable of human speech. However, at the stage the beings were at now, they were still able to articulate, amid ululations, enough to say, "Clench yourself!"

Now DesPlessis d'Arc had never clenched before, that is, not "in the whole figure," and for a bit he could scarcely credit that he had heard aright. He could, however, picture how clenching might work, so he crouched down and gathered all his members in to himself as tightly as might be.

Yes, that's what the gucks had in mind. The two creatures now took up positions on outer opposite edges of the little level place and then with one accord made a rush at d'Arc in the middle.

The result was astonishing. The huge gumdrop coalesced into one entity again, completely encapsulating the rubber-suited human. For the sake of the rarefied air on the heights of the great ice cream cone peak Fritz had for some time had his aqualung attached and so it remained now and he breathing easily, inside the guck!

Now Guckins could talk again. Fritz could hear him "at the source": close to wherever the speech sounds were emanating from. Have you ever listed to anyone talk—from within that person? It's different. Jonah must have experienced it as the whale sang him lullabies. And each of us must have know the sensation before birth!

The guck said (approximately): "I'm going to roll down

the mountainside," and afterwards acted upon its promise.

Fritz was dressed for going over Niagara Falls in a barrel and the effect here was very much the same. The pounding was horrific! while visibility, through the guck's only semi-translucent substance, was nil. There was just the head-over-heels rolling and scraping, with occasional exhilarating great wild leaping bounds, for twenty minutes. Then the creature rolled out with immense velocity across an eighth-of-a-mile of sugar beach, struck a most fortunately placed great crag of almond roca, split in two, and lay still.

Fritz d'Arc crawled out of the wreckage, badly bruised but ambulatory. Bits of the guck's interior clung to his wetsuit. These he scraped into an approximate ball, which, when placed on the sand, sprouted feet and ran and rolled hither and yon until it had a fine new coating of sugar grains.

The major portions of the guck seemed unaccustomedly winded by their exertion. Fritz had to go to one of the great flabbily flaccidly lying halves and by main strength drag it seven yards to its mate. There he rolled and mashed the two pieces, all mixed up with beach sugar, into one.

"Whew!" said the guck. "Thanks. That was quite a descent." But soon it had recovered its spirits and gabbled on as vivaciously as ever: "Now it's up to you, master." With one toe it indicated the sugary strand. "This is my element. There's yours," and the toe lifted to point to the sea.

"Right," said Fritz. "So this is where we part company," and he stuck out a hand hail-fellowly.

The guck looked at him reproachfully. "After such kindness that would be a dismal thing to do," it said—although uttering the words in initial-alphabetical order.

d'Arc was non-plussed. He enjoyed the company of the devoted guck but how in the world were they to cross the

ocean together?

Guckins divined his quandary. "You got a knife?" it said, seemingly propos de bottes.

"Er—yeah, sure." Fritz reached back and secured his foldable half-machete.

"Use it on me."

By now the American knew better than to argue with his unlikely pal. With loving care he attacked him and sawed him in half.

While still able to communicate the guck said, "Carry on!... Smaller and smaller." After that it did not speak.

Fritz got comfortable (sitting on the lesser bruised buttock) on the sands and whittled at his friend. Soon a great many lime (he ate one to be sure) gumdrops scampered about the beach. Though so many, Fritz was encouraged to see that their total mass was considerably less than that of the "united" guck. He chopped further and presently the beach was peopled with numberless dark green, dense, tough jujubes that would have filled a small punchbowl. Another hour of the nitty-gritty and Fritz d'Arc had a handful of black sensen chips that would fit in a dry pocket. The man wrapped them in a handkerchief and put them there.

He pulled up his nose-piece again, breathed in and out sharply twice for confirmation, and stepped into the ocean.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"Cathie, my heart's darling, come to me!"

"Please!—Mr. Fruakx. I am very much devoted to you—as you know. But we are not after all on first-name terms!"

The poor Frogman was crushed. "Why, then, my beloved, did you tell me your name was Catherine Eudora?"

"It is!"

"But if I am not to use it?"

"That was only in case you wanted to address a billet doux to me—or send me a box of chocolates."

"Frogs don't eat chocolate."

"No, but just the same: it's one of the things ardent swains do."

"Human ones maybe."

"Aren't we every bit as good as humans?"

"Yes, but—"

"Well, then."

Cathie Eudora hopped thoughtfully to the edge of the pond, then turned her head slightly to see of Fred was following. He was, of course—and in his mind still calling her "Lovely" even if he couldn't say "Cathie" out loud.

It was the fifth day of their courtship. They had naturally moved in together from the start. Cathie's hole in the wet mud bank was quite capacious enough for the two; Fred even had his own chamber. That was a must, for, as Cathie said, she "hated any form of uncalled-for familiarity."

With Fred now distinctly placed at one remove (for if you can't tutoyer a person, you obviously can't do anything even more liberty-taking!), the two frogs were able to fleet the time carelessly, without any danger of tadpoles. Cathie was a career woman and had no time—for the present—for the cares of motherhood.

What was her career then?

After a few days' hesitation it came out.

"Well, you see—" and here the lady frog gestured diffidently at her vanity case. "I'm down to the last tiniest smidgen of eye shadow. I need refills! I have had the tantalizing idea—since I must perforce seek out the manufacturers of the products—of offering myself as door-to-door merchandiser in their line of goods. It'll get me out—don't you see?—to experience something of the great world. I've been cooped up here so long—"

"How long?"

"Well, more than forty years that I know of." (They don't mind admitting their age in Oz, where everyone is ageless.)

"And before that?"

"I suppose I was born here—though I recall nothing of my tadpolehood."

"Family?"

"None. I've lived alone always and gradually, I guess, come to believe I was unique in the world... Then you came along..."

"And then...?" The Frogman was on tenterhooks for any declarations of partiality by his adored one.

"Well, you're so different. That is: you're so much the same—as I am. I suppose I'm so—very fond of you because you're my own kind. You're just like me!"

The much more experienced Frogman knew otherwise. "Actually, my divine maiden, I believe I can assure you that you... care for me—if you do—not because I am distinctively different."

"Oh, really? You mean there *is* a difference?... Well, of course I can see that you're a greeny yellow—or a yellowy green—while I'm purple. But otherwise?"

The Frogman had to explain the difference. And, since his lady was so very sheltered and so refined, that needed to be done circumspectly and took several days.

At last Catherine Eudora understood why, instinctively,

she had put her guest in a separate room. Her education, you see, had been neglected, in fact, non-existent. All she knew was what passing travelers, and they were few, had told her. Once a wandering minstrel had strolled that way and entertained her for a week with madrigals. That's how she learned about billets doux, chocolate boxes, and the things that ardent swains do. But the inner workings of these matters were all unknown to her. She only knew you got babies by kissing.

This last point she was quite convinced of and no amount of clinical explanation by Fred Fruakx really budged her conviction. It had been the burden of every one of the minstrel's lays: the ultimate act in a courtship was the tender placing of lips to lips. After that it was all down-hill: diaper-washing and perambulators. Catherine was not ready for the latter just yet.

"I shall call myself 'the Nova Lady'," she said reflectively, poised once again on the brink of the pond.

"Why 'Nova'?" asked Fred.

"That's what it says on the box. See?" Cathie retreated from the pool edge and went and squatted by the vanity case, her one possession. "'Nova Products, 14 Pansy Place, Amethyst City, Gills.' Serial number 408. Is the Amethyst City far from here?"

"Oh, it's a good three-day hop."

"Just as I feared. I wanted—oh, for decades!—to make the trip but I didn't dare, alone. Now... with you..."

"Oh, my beloved!" The Frogman leapt toward her again and tried to embrace the lady.

She fended him off smartly and jumped into the pond. In a moment her head reappeared. "No freshness!" she called merrily. "So we're traveling together? But we can still observe the proprieties?"

Fred followed dilatorily toward the water, thrown again into a pensive mood. "When did you actually get that

make-up box?" he called.

"I don't know. I've just always had it." Cathie climbed on a Victoria Regia lily-pad at a safe distance and reminisced. "Of course as a young frogling I tried painting pictures with the rouge and mascara when I discovered the colors would rub off. Now I realize—from what you tell me—that it must have been the eternal feminine in me that led me after a few years to begin painting myself. I was providential enough from the start not to use the materials wantonly, but even so they lasted me only about eight years. I've hoarded the last tiny dabs now for ages. I've longed so to get refills!"

The frog lady sighed expansively. Then her mood became playful again. "Last one in's a lousy loser!" she cried and the lavender underside of her rear feet were seen, followed by a big splash.

But the Frogman did not follow. His pensivity remained with him. So they were to travel together? Strange, but he had a reluctance to break their idyll. They had been together almost a month now, living the lotus life beside the eternal summer-pond. Who knew what happenstances might part them if they ventured away? Yet it was true that he himself ought to get to the nearest shop and acquire pencils and paper, for nary a word had he yet set down of his memoirs. But he was living the halcyon hour of his life! of which it seemed a pity, rather, to expend even a few minutes merely recalling passages from a less vital past.

Then he glanced up. Lovely was being rather a long time away. He expected her every moment to raise her head and twit him for not being a sufficiently adoring swain and following her into the pool. Perhaps she'd got preoccupied by her underwater gardening again. From their earliest days together she had complained of a tangle of roots—like mangrove—and subaqueous grasses that inhibited diving to the deepest portions of the little lake.

Whenever they were out for a swim they'd tug together on some stubborn branch or frond and get it to the surface and away.

But then he fell into a reverie again. What might the future hold for them? This purple pond was all very well but he'd left bigger ponds than this in the past because they didn't offer sufficient scope for his vaunting pride and curiosity about the world. They couldn't stay here forever: that much was clear.

But where should they go? Somewhere worthy of his lovely Cathie. He thought of her in terms of nobility, even royalty, and wished he had a kingdom to offer her. He'd like to bring tributary nations to kneel before he scepter and to swear allegiance to her lips, her eyes, her... well, perhaps not hair exactly.

He did have a... state, he supposed you'd call it, of which he had once been ruler, and, as far as he knew, still was, at least titularly. But would Lovely want to live among a lot of Yips? The last time he'd been back there—gracious, it must be a good twenty years now—he'd thought the manner of the populace left much to be desired. Even, he had caught echoes of murmurs: that the Yips couldn't be see any point in being "ruled" by an absentee frog. For "ruled" you could scarcely call it when wide-ranging carney-man Fred Fruakx didn't even bother to send back a directive one in a twelve-month.

Anyway, the pond on the Yip mountain top was one of the smallest he'd ever turned his back on. He must have something altogether more grandiose than that to offer his Lovely.

Lovely! Where in Oz's name was she?! No frog, no matter how majestic of lung capacity, ever stayed submerged this long!

With the Frogman, to react was to act. With a mighty spring he flew from the pond rim in a great arc to crease

the water and dive deep, deep, looking frantically in every direction. Here, there, hither, and yon he darted, seeking the way and straying from the way, not knowing how to find his lady fair but toiling desperately to find it out, tormenting himself to catch a glimpse of her.

Alas, he had not taken an instant to think. Now he must, perforce. He surfaced briefly, gasped a huge lungful (all the while thinking), then plunged to the deepest point of the lake.

The mangrove-root thicket, of course! As stated, they always got in a few licks of work there whenever they went for a bathe. When Fred hadn't appeared, following her, Cathie would have given herself a stance by pretending that she'd only come into the water to get on with her dredging labors.

Oh, glory, yes, there she was! concealed for a moment behind a screen of fronds which undulated in the swirl created by the Frogman's own lunging progress through the water. Cathie also undulated—but otherwise was still in a tragic attitude, three legs straining upward. Three legs?! Yes, the fourth extended downward into black ooze—and Fred couldn't see what was holding it.

He took a header, scrabbled with his forefeet, churned up a great whirl of mud, glimpsed a broken purply-white plant stem as thick as his foreleg. The frog-woman must have been trying to root out one of the largest and most entrenched of the subaquatic plants, probably with a view to surfacing with it and showing him coquettishly how she'd improved the hour of his inattention.

Her left ankle was trapped between two tightly pressing root-stems. That much he could make out by the dint of feeling about. To see anything was impossible in the gurgling mud. In his mind he assessed tensions and stresses, then inserted his body between the higher-rising lengths of the stems and got leverage with his powerful

(new-grown!) hind legs. To save his lady love with limbs that had not even existed two years ago...! He heaved. The plant trunks moved apart. Lovely was loose and began her slow drift to the surface of the pond!

Fruakx sprang after her, caught the fair form in his forelegs, and beat upward with strong kicks. Pushing the body ahead of him he made for the bank, there to shove her ashore without ceremony. He hopped out of the water, dragged the unconscious frog into prone position, and began artificial respiration.

In, out, in, out: violently he manhandled the treasured form he had never thought but to caress with the utmost daintiness. She didn't respond! Oh, dread! What could he do?

As he pressed, lifted, pressed, he thought frantically. There was no physician within miles. She could not die! Well, she couldn't of course, in Oz but she might well remain in a coma forever, suffer brain damage, never open her eyes to recognize him again.

There was only one thing more he could try: mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Speedily, desperately, he heaved and flung the unconscious frog form on its back, passionately (in every way) he pressed his lips to hers and blew with all his strength. Powerful pressure against her ribs. Again, mouth against mouth and breath surging into her lungs. She would live! She would, she must!

And then! her lungs took hold, they moved on their own, she breathed! And as the frightened Frogman watched there came, he thought, a change.

Sure enough: before his unbelieving eyes it was a case of frog into frauenzimmer. The purple frog shape altered, grew hair—and in a moment a statuesque human female form lay before him, all clothed in its own long flowing magenta tresses.

Her eyes batted. She was regaining consciousness!

Several deep breaths and then the figure raised its head while its eyes opened and spied the Frogman.

"Oh, horrors!! A nasty great frog!" gasped the woman, clutching her rich flowing hair about her, and began to scream and scream.