

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

“Now tell me how you did it!” exclaimed Cheecheecheepip, the king of the Winged Monkeys, to witch Mombi, who, for the occasion, had also assumed the form of a bewinged simian.

Mombi preened herself—as well as one *could* preen while flying high over a purple forest and helping to haul an unconscious creature as large as herself. She was pleased at the excited curiosity of royalty. While feeling—nay, *knowing* herself to be the equal or superior of every other sorcerer, Mombi still felt a slight twinge of awe for royalty and delighted in winning their attention, if not by fair means, then by foul. In this case—by the lights of the two individuals talking—it was fair.

“First I had to stop off at the Amethyst City and pick up some materials,” she recalled. “I had nothing of the sort at home at the cottage, of course. I never used the stuff myself—”

Cheecheecheepip might well ask himself privily why she didn’t! If she was such a powerful enchantress, you’d think the first thing she would do would be to make herself gorgeous, sensationally beautiful... Then, on second thought, he asked himself why? after all. Perhaps the witch had no interest in attracting people in crowds by a pleasing exterior. He happened to know that such had been the feeling of the Witch of the East, whom he had briefly served. Yet he did find it hard to credit, himself counting on his monkey beauty to keep his harem ladies under the spell.

But Mombi was going on: “Then, just before I got to the palace, I went into the bushes and made myself over as a blonde fashionable young minx of twenty-four. If I was going to be saleswoman for a line of cosmetics I had to look as if they worked!

“In the one street of the village I stopped a little girl and gave her some sweetmeats—not hocused—for running

into the palace and telling the princess a lady wished for an interview with her in the utterest secrecy.

“Clever child: she came back in ten minutes to say that at four-thirty sharp the way would be clear. I was to open a small door at the far left of the main entrance to the princely residence—just around the corner—follow the only corridor there until I came to a royal purple runner-carpet, and then to the left along that I would find the princess in a private anteroom off the throne room.

“That all went according to plan. I must say the princess was charming. For a moment I—Mombi!—hesitated. But then I remembered that the woman before me was a sorceress as well. I do not suffer other enchantresses gladly. All I can clear from my path, the better.

“‘The Vano Lady?’ said she, looking at my calling card. ‘Are your wares really as wonder-working as this says?’

“Did she expect me to say No?! Idly I wondered, if she was up to much as a magic-worker, why she had need of others’ beauty aids.

“She seemed to anticipate my curiosity. ‘You may well wonder,’ she began, ‘why I who have some traces of beauty left—’ Silly cow; she was gorgeous, sensationally beautiful—and well she knew it!—‘why I,’ she went on, ‘seek the advice of another in matters of cosmeticity.

“‘My trouble is deep,’ she declared and fetched a great sigh. ‘My husband does not care for my form of beauty. Oh, he is true to me in his fashion—as an honorable gentleman he could be no less—but for some time I have been aware that his devotion to me is based almost entirely on gratitude, indebtedness—’

“‘Oh?’ I inserted, not at all above hearing a good bit of gossip from the source. I expressed as much piqued curiosity as I could without actually appearing too in ignorance of her life story. As a famous princess she wouldn’t be pleased to think she was virtually unknown

to me. The most I dared to say was, 'I'm new in this part of the world. I've operated mostly down by the Winkie-Quadling border.' I lied though in fact I had at times done the odd bit of magic down that way.

"'I fell in love with my husband when he was just a child,' she recounted. 'He was the loveliest human being I'd ever seen—despite—even perhaps because of his orange coloring, so rare in this part of the world.'

"'Where did you meet?' I asked courteously.

"'At the court of the Gilkennys,' she told. 'The Prince'—oh, it was quite obvious that he was of royal blood—'appeared to be a victim of amnesia. Unfortunately he never did remember his antecedents. He was simply found wandering in the village street one day—'related the princess.

"I caught my breath. 'When did you say this was?!' I asked with the greatest interest.

"'I didn't. It was twenty-three—no, that would be twenty-four years ago. The Gilkennys adopted him—and as soon as I saw him I adopted him in my turn. He grew up in my court, wanted for nothing, and in due course was taken by me in wedlock. Of course he's grateful—but I want—I've always wanted—more than that! I want love that is for myself! not for what I can do. Can your arts give it to me?'

"I could not resist expressing that other curiosity about her. It was yourself—"Mombi glanced aside at Cheecheecheepip, "who had told me what a formidable enchantress she gave herself out to be. But if she was so powerful, then—?! How could I phrase the question without annoying her?

"'Your own arts,' I suggested discreetly, 'have given you infinite attractiveness—'

"'Yes, yes,' she replied impatiently, 'and I'm—well, I won't say how old and the looks haven't faded—or perhaps just a trifle. Also, I could make myself over with

other good looks. But that would merely alarm him, don't you see? I thought perhaps you had some subtle fragrance, some particular elixir...' But here she grew despondent. 'I'm sorry. I've wasted your time.'

"But that line didn't suit my book at all, of course. I reined in my foolish curiosity and talked turkey—or perhaps peacock. 'Do not be hasty in your judgment, good madam,' I hastened to interpose. 'Vano guarantees the woman who follows our five-week course faithfully will win the man of her dreams without fail.'

"'Well, well, let me see your wares,' said Gayelette with an air of resignation.

"'It isn't so much wares as the course of treatments,' I explained. 'The first behandling is given free. If your grace would like to take your place on that couch yonder...'

"Well, she went along with it. It was really almost too easy. I had her lie down in her peignoir and close her eyes...

"My materials were instantly brought forth. She would be transfigured in no time at all. But into what? That point I had actually not decided with myself before finding my way so expeditiously into her presence.

"You, your majesty, had insisted she be made into something really hideous. In my mind I had turned over all sorts. My first inspiration was to make her look like a monkey! Poetic justice, you see. But then I realized you would scarcely be flattered—and consequently not amused—by that. Then I thought of a Jack Russell, or a hyena, or a Brahma cow. The latter wouldn't do, of course, because you had agreed to meet me to carry away the transformed sorceress and dump her somewhere out of harm's way—and remote! where she wouldn't be immediately found and restored to her true shape and all the fun spoiled. For that purpose her enchantment mustn't be too enormous.

"The upshot was that I really hadn't reached any decision. Now suddenly time was of the essence. I racked

my brain. Then all at once her ranidian boy friend — well, husband, if you will — returned to my mind, with his mighty thighs and popping eyes. The very thing! And that would be poetic justice too!

“Quickly the change was made. Fortunately the sorceress had left the key in the withdrawing room door. I turned it and took it away with me, just in case somebody should come poking about while I was outside for my rendezvous with you. I transformed myself as you see me, dumped my magic kit in some convenient dense shrubbery, and waited for your prompt arrival. The rest you know.”

“Competently handled,” said Cheecheecheepip. “I give you credit! But tell me: When your mission is accomplished, how will you be able to resume your usual form? Don’t you require your magic implements for that?”

Mombi was silent for some moments, spying out the lie of the land below. They were now soaring upward toward the high sierra of the tallest mountain ranges of Oz, those forbidding peaks which partly form the Gillikin-Munchkin frontier in that violet-blue part of the country.

Then she answered abstractedly: “Of course, yes, I do need them. I’ll have to keep this form until I can get back to Tresgaie again and pick up my kit. As you can see, I couldn’t have it with me now. I’m sorry to have to load you down with that other box.” (The winged ape-king had a sizable oblong leatherette-covered case strapped to his back below the wings.) “Anything more would have been too much to carry.” Here the witch gave an ill-natured jolt to their unconscious passenger.

But the monkey king’s question had started her dreaming. “From there it’ll be off as quick as I can go to that cave where you say — what’s his name? Wam — will be waiting. I’m keen to receive my just deserts for this little operation.”

“I feel sure you’ll be pleased,” promised

Cheecheecheepip. "Among other treasures I recall there's a shaker-full of poudre de vie."

"That'll be fun to play with, for sure," chortled Mombi.

Onward they flew, now cresting the high ridge, and the air was biting cold, though it was May. Then they began the descent into the Valley of the Purple Moon.

The monkey king was thoughtful again. "And you're perfectly sure there's not a chance of a slip-up; the transformation is permanent?"

"As permanent as I could make it," assured the sorceress. "Unfortunately, with this particular kind of enchantment, an antidote must be built in, otherwise it doesn't seem to take properly. But I fancy myself as a concocter of unbreakable antidotes," and here she cackled lewdly. "I put my trademark on it," she added.

"And what is that?"

"Ah, that would be telling," smirked the witch. "But then, still, I dare say you of all people can be trusted not to break the spell. My trademark is the kiss cure. But then I always choose a very arcane sort of kiss as the only one that can unwork a transformation—the kiss of a giraffe, for instance, or a kiss on the twenty-ninth of February. I remember a little orange frog I once turned into something quite different: he could only be disenchanting by the kiss of a new-crowned queen. And then there was—oh, wait—"

The flying duo had coasted rapidly down on the air currents and were now close over the ground in the valley bottom: a remote unpeopled dell but ravishing in its purple beauty. They followed a little meandering stream and the witch was scanning the terrain with total concentration.

"Yes?" urged Cheecheecheepip presently. "—you were saying...?"

"What was I saying? Oh, yes, another transformation of mine was of a very important little girl fairy into a boy! But that's right: I didn't use the kiss antidote on that one. I

wasn't taking any chances. That one will have to be unwound from scratch, reperforming the whole transformation process but in reverse. Not that I have any intention of ever doing such a reversal."

"And the present case?" pursued the king of the Winged Monkeys. "What's the antidote there?"

Again Mombi's attention was distracted. But then her face lost its air of concentration. "This'll do!... don't you think?" she asked, gesturing at a little lake that was just coming up below. "Let's descend... You couldn't find a remoter spot than this—and still be in Oz."

The strange avians dropped quickly to the bank of the pond and deposited their burden. As Cheecheecheepip unstrapped the case from his back, "The antidote?" he persisted.

"A simple one, really," stated Mombi, "—but impossible of fulfillment, I'd say."

Their passenger the monkeys had dumped unceremoniously among the reeds. "She must be wakened by a kiss of passion," stated Mombi. "Here the witch applied the toe of her boot to the rump of her senseless victim and gave a great shove. Kervlash! went the splash of a heavy body falling into the lake. "That'll soon revive her!" crowed the enchantress. "Now I ask you: Who's ever going to kiss a huge ugly overgrown purple frog passionately?!"

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

There was trouble in paradise.

The seeds of it had been planted, in fact, a generation before and they lay in the character of that quixotic creature Till Orangespiegel. He was a dabbler in arcane lore who had migrated to Oz with his sister in the distant past and set up, in the far southwest corner of the country, a factory for making mischief.

Principal among his exploits had been that of turning a large triangle of Oz territory the color orange. Equally impressive, however—though temporary, and now safely dispelled—was his enchantment whereby the entire land of Oz became its own mirror image.

No Nobel-type prize is awarded in Oz, so Orangespiegel could not get a peace prize for stopping a war he had started, but he brought off a trick that was nearly as good. He blustered and boasted—but also displayed bravery and a more than average facility at handling magic properties—and succeeded in making rather an impression on Glinda the Good Sorceress of the South during the operation to dispel finally the country-wide mirror-image effect that he himself had unintentionally brought into being.

The upshot was that Glinda invited Till to spend a year at her court, perfecting some of his magic skills and incidentally (and this was perhaps the sorceress' real motivation) perfecting his character. With such a clever practitioner on the loose in her immediate vicinity, Glinda preferred that his motivations be noble rather than otherwise.

She supposed that she had been successful. Every day Till gained in magical dexterity and every day he was witness to how Glinda was fawned on, loved, and deferred to because she was so *good*. Surely he would now go and be likewise...?

All might have been well if Till had simply returned to his estate in the Unnikeg wilderness and practised to make

perfect. But something fateful happened instead. As a reward for his cleverness and successful accomplishment of the southern sorceress' one-year course in Advanced Magicology, Orangespiegel was invited to pass a month at an even grander court, that of Princess Ozma at the Emerald City.

Now where Glinda administered her country of the Quadlings as governor or viceroy while keeping all regal display at a minimum, the court of Ozma was a right royal one. There was no limit to the pageantry, the colorful trappings, the ceremony, and the *majesty* of that court.

Till Orangespiegel was smitten with a fatal attraction to the regent's way of life. He attended eagerly at the daily briefing sessions with Ozma but whereas she was trying to indoctrinate him in the merely technical details of being her man in Unnikegwick, he was all the time thinking how glorious it was going to be when he had proclaimed himself *king* of that little sub-realm.

He played along, however, with all Ozma's instructions and warnings and for all she knew when he departed to take up the reins of government in the orange republic he was as loyal a governing agent as she possessed.

Time had not been standing still in Unnikegwick. Being so late in coming into existence, the little country seemed to rush especially fast in trying to catch up with its compère regions. Industry had already been of some importance in the area; the copper mines of that corner of Oz were third only to the cave realms of the Gnomes and the Underground Kings in national mineral importance. But when gold was discovered in the vicinity of Thobdibnub Elsqualspil and the veins soon proved to be the largest in Oz, the orange country shot ahead.

Gold had no monetary value in Oz, of course, but was immensely popular for every sort of household use and decoration. All the goldsmiths of Oz immediately flocked

to Thobdibnub, which soon could not be denied the status of a "city."

A rivalry grew up. Orangespiegel at his country house which he was rapidly turning into a splendid castle felt threatened by the bustling thriving town. When heads of state now visited Unnikegwick they had a funny habit of gravitating first to the big little city with its attractive air of being where the action was. Only later would they recall the necessity of playing a duty call way down by the southern frontier and presenting their credentials to the titular representative of national government in his big echoing house, which was impressing enough but dull, containing as it did only Till, his vainglory, and a crowd of flunkies. Both his sister and his fiancée had long deserted the conceited overlord.

One day Fruakx's Frolics, like all the world, was drawn to the humming hive of Thobdibnub. The traveling side-show camped on a green outside the town and threw up its tent, then the entertainers fanned out through the city streets to distribute handbills.

Fred himself delivered one at the door of the little palace of Mon Désir. A pretty lady answered the jangling pull bell. "Oh, what fun!" she said. "The children will love it. But—oh, dear, I wonder if it's quite safe...?"

"Safe, madam?" queried the Frogman incredulously. He had heard of people declining to come to the carney show because it was kid stuff or oldfashioned or about as exciting as boiled boots but he had never encountered one who feared to come to the entertainment.

"Oh, I don't mean the carnival performance," explained the good-wife. "But these ugly gangs roving the streets. Haven't you noticed?"

"Do you mean the electioneers?" said Fred. "I've seen people with banners saying '*Capitality for Thobdibnub!*'..."

"Those aren't electioneers. They're enemy agents! They

don't belong here. Besides, there's no referendum planned."

"How strange," quoth the Frogman. "What does it mean?"

"They're sent by that awful Orangespiegel to stir up trouble. He wants to give the town a bad name so our delegation who are now at the Emerald City will fail in their mission."

"Which is...?"

"Why, to get Princess Ozma to designate Thobdibnub as capital of Unnikegwick, of course." Dame Dayna marveled that the Frogman was so ignorant of all relating to the burning issue.

Fruakx grew thoughtful. Till Orangespiegel was an ancient acquaintance of his. He wondered: Could he do anything to help calm down the heated situation which was alarming this pleasant little woman?

He told her something of his thoughts. "But," he said, "I wonder whom I should speak to here about it...? I would want to go to Orangespiegel as official representative of interests here."

"Why, my husband, of course!" exclaimed Dayna, growing enthusiastic. "He's easily the most important man in Thobdibnub. He's a former Ruling Prince, you know."

"How interesting," said Fruakx, who in fact did not know—and blamed his ignorance in this matter. It was also most odd that his little act had somehow never played this particular town before. "When could I meet him?"

"Come through right now! He's out at the pool with the children."

"Pool" was always an attractive word for the ranidian, who hadn't had a swim in—heavens!—since the Winkie River two weeks ago. He could not help looking longingly at the water when Dame Dayna led him through the old building and out to a modern play area on what had been

a meadow abutting on the little palace.

An orange-haired gentleman in trunks and flippers came to meet them. Dayna made introductions. "His Grace, Prince Quelala—"

"Quelala!" cried the frog. "Goodness gracious!" He had a sudden impulse to go down on one knee. "Your grace will not remember me. Our little troupe had the pleasure of performing for you at Tresgaie in—let me see, twenty-seven, I believe."

"Not remember the celebrated Frogman of Oz?" said the orange prince genially. "Come, come! In fact, do come..." He stepped away a pace or two to where refreshments were set out on an umbrella table. "I wonder... dearest, our guest might like to join our water sports...?"

That was just the invitation the Frogman had been hoping for and in not very long a time he was rollicking in the water and proving to be a great favorite with Quelala's three little children of various sexes.

An hour later, however, the two males were alone at the table, eating watercress sandwiches and talking seriously. "The whole thing's a bit of a bore really," said Quelala. "These Unnikegs have turned out to be awfully nationalistic, not to say chauvinistic, and they keep thinking up ways to polish the national ego. The latest gambit is to promote this town as the Unnikeg metropolis, as are the Sapphire City or the Amethyst City—not to mention the Emerald City—for their particular regions—"

"Yes, but—" interrupted the Frogman—and then shut up, suddenly getting an idea.

"You were going to say?"

"Oh, a passing thought—but I'll keep it in reserve, just in case there may be use of it later. Please go on in your exposition."

"Some hotheads have got the idea of having the town officially designated capital of Unnikegwick and have

collected a delegation—”

“Madam Dayna told me,” assisted the frog.

“My worthy father-in-law was asked to head it and despite my disapproval has gone off with the others to pay court to Princess Ozma. And of course none of that sits well with Governor Orangespiegel, who claims his castle is the only seat of government in the republic—”

“‘Republic’ is a funny word, isn’t it?” put in the Frogman. “Here, I mean. There’s no elected head of state.”

“Oh, it’s just window dressing,” readily confessed the ex-prince. “What they mean is ‘democracy,’ for all offices except the top one *are* elective, though allegiance to a distant higher-up is recognized—as Canada or Australia, out in the great world. But they think republic sounds better than dominion.”

“Madam Dayna says the electioneers I’ve seen are actually Orangespiegel’s agents.”

“Mmm. The governor’s become more subtle in his power plays than I understand he was in earlier times. He’s not making any loud claims for himself but engineering it so that the rivals disqualify themselves by apparent bad behavior.”

“I see,” said Fruakx. “He sounds as if he ought to be visited—by someone who might be able to gain his ear more easily than another.”

“Would you take it upon yourself...?” asked Quelala.

“Yes. I would,” confirmed the Frogman.

That evening there were riots in Thobdibnub—in Oz!—and Fred Fruakx realized his mission was urgent.

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

The young frogman fled incontinently.

With his only companion and confidant now reduced to a handful of dry chips that seemed for all the world inert and lifeless, the memory of the only other live and self-movable (though *just*) creature he had seen on the dessert island came back to DesPlessis d'Arc with renewed and shuddery force. The thing was too awful. He had to clear away the dreadful mess in the crater for its own sake and the sake of general tidiness and decency. To think of it lying there groaning and agonizing, unable to help itself, year after year! The young man knew well enough what it meant and he renewed now, as he swam, his vow to help the pitiable creature to extinction.

Explosives were the answer, of course. Weren't they? He had trained for two years now in the art of getting out of the way things you didn't want to exist. For that purpose there was nothing more effective and complete than gelignite—unless it be T.N.T. Sure, it would hurt a little, but only for a second—and then blessed total non-consciousness—if not to say 'non-existence.' The peculiar nature of the dessert island made d'Arc suspicious that he might in fact have fetched up in the realms of faerie, where he knew such phenomena as the impossibility of death sometimes obtained.

From the ice cream peak he had been able to make out on the far horizon a faint shimmering coastline: something greater than a mere island. For that he was now making. A couple of days of easy swimming—with plenty of time out to rest—and he could get there fine. Hunger might be a problem but he had stuffed some sugarplums in a water-tight pouch at the small of his back and they would prevent at least total hunger prostration. On he stroked.

Half a day of that. Nothing to be said about it. He was occasionally aware of the proximity of denizens of the deep but they did not threaten. A group of pink porpoises had

even been playful and boisterous. Just in case he was near Oz Fritz spoke to them, both over and under the water surface, but though they looked at him and each other questioningly they said nothing he could understand.

But now he was approaching a little wooden island. At least, as he got nearer, he could see patches of paint-bare timber on the steeply slanting sides of the body of land. If not Oz, the natural phenomena in this part of the world struck him as very *like* Oz.

Even in Oz, however, the islands do not heave up and down on the billows. This one did. Not very much. About as much, say, as a whale appears to heave on the waves.

The man swam nearer. The island, on the other hand, swam away. And when an island gets to swimming and summons all its resources: iron, tin, manganese, copra, or hemp?, it can move a lot faster than a man.

Fritz stopped and put his hands on his hips, as smartly as one can do so while treading water. He grabbed off his mask and yelled "Hey!" — just in case there were any inhabitants on the rapidly retreating island. To his wonderment the great black object ceased suddenly to move. Then what Fritz had taken to be a peninsula was revealed as a tail, which vigorously churned the water and propelled the vast shape about in a clockwise movement. Other aspects of the land came into view and then the island winked at him.

Not only that but it began to talk. At least, the tiny squealing screams seemed to issue from where a mouth must be, supposing that somewhere near its eye the island had a mouth. It was still some hundreds of yards off and it was hard to tell.

Now, however, as the body of land swam straight toward the frogman and two, though tiny, eyes were revealed, it became each instant clearer that the entity was a whale, albeit a wooden one, with a wrap-around walk-

way at 'sea level', bordered by a railing—for passenger protection.

A tiny figure was hopping up and down on that railed walkway. As Fritz got nearer under the lea of the vast black floating animal-mountain he saw that the figure was that of a youth of about eighteen and that it was in fact from his mouth that the speech sounds were coming. The sounds were, "Swimmer, ahoy! Avast and belay! Come aboard and be recognized!"

That DesPlessis d'Arc was perfectly willing to do. He paddled near, stuck up a hand, and the two young men's first handshake was also a hauling-aboard. Names were exchanged. Fritz gave a selection of his and the younger fellow said, "Mine's Buck. And this is Davy Jones, the Wooden Whale of Oz." Oz!

It was the first time Fritz d'Arc had ever been presented to a creature on whose lower lip he was standing. Nor could the whale jeopardize his passengers' safety by using the lip to articulate. He just double-bassed "Oh hoo ho ho ho!" deep down somewhere in a submarine larynx and it was understood that all three were now friends.

"Boy, am I glad to see you!" exclaimed Buck heartily.

Fritz grinned. "The feeling couldn't be more mutual. Or maybe it could! Because if anybody wanted to see anybody—just anybody—it was me! But how so in your case?"

So he who had been Lucky Bucky of Oz⁷ told him. "Davy's the first whale ever to have visited the Emerald City!" That had, indeed, been a triumph that everyone agreed would probably never be capped. "But after that—" here Buck's voice had dropped almost to a whisper—"I have to be awfully careful. His hearing is fabulous. All whales' is. They can 'read' echoes like radar.

"Yes, you see Davy became my familiar—like Dorothy's dog, or Betsy with her mule—or Trot and her uncle. Where

⁷ See LUCKY BUCKY IN OZ. Editor's note.

you saw one you saw the other. People figured we belonged together and were disappointed if they caught sight of one without the other. Well, that's all right in the case of a dog or an uncle, but what about me?!" and the boy looked both aggrieved and shamefaced at the same time.

His voice had sunk ever lower so Fritz had to put his ear to Buck's mouth. "It was terribly limiting for me," the youth went on. "We couldn't stay in the Emerald City, of course, where Davy was, himself, bigger than Lake Quad, the only body of water there. I'd love to have hung around and hated leaving.

"There was nothing for it, though. We had to get back to the ocean. And I can tell you: I've been pretty bored since!" Here young Buck incautiously raised his voice a demi-decibel.

That was too much. The whale had naturally been fine-tuning his inner antennae to catch whatever he could of the talk—so fascinating—of the two young men. He heard Buck's last remark and he knew what it meant. The topic had not by any means been able to be left untouched upon over the years.

Buck looked up sheepishly and Fritz followed his gaze along the side of the whale. A big wooden tear, the size of a basketball, formed in Davy's eye and rolled down his cheek to fall into the sea with a splash and float away to star-board.

"Good thing there's no wind," muttered Buck. "Once the wind caught one of his tears and beamed me with it. I thought I had a fracture." Then loudly he remarked, "It's no use crying, Davy! We've been over this before. You know I love you more than anyone else in the world. I can't be happy without you—or completely happy with you. But if I have to choose I'd rather be with you than without you. So be a good thing and dry up! Okay?"

The whale smiled, which had the effect of stretching

the walkway along its lip an extra three yards on either side and squeezing the two young men up against his wooden hide.

"But, oh," sighed Buck in a normal-loud voice, "how I long for an adventure! We haven't had anything like one in years!"

"I'm afraid I've got one for you," answered Fritz, "—if you care for the sort of thing."

"I do! What is it?" demanded the boy eagerly.

Then Fritz told his story, or as much of it as had happened since he flubbed his finals as Annapoluxent. He ended with, "Have you got any gelignite by any chance— or T.N.T.?"

"Hey, Davy! Any explosives in the locker?" yelled Buck. It was just a polite question. He knew the answer—and he heard a deep booming "No" that echoed his own thought. After these years he ought to know intimately, in minute detail, the contents of Davy Jones' locker, which is located in the bilges of that particular wooden whale. Actually they had a few sticks of dynamite, but what could they avail against the mile-wide body of the No-Man as d'Arc described it?

"So that's where I'm on my way," said Fritz. "Somewhere on the mainland there must be explosives and I'll need a whale of a lot of them for the job I have to do."

"Hmm, a whale," said Buck reflectively. "Do you think a whaleful would be enough?"

"Depends on the whale," said Fritz off-handedly, then happened to think what they were saying. "Say—what have you got in mind?"

"You said an adventure! We'll go with you to find your explosives, but, even more usefully: we can get 'em back to the island for you."

"Then the job's more than half done already," said Fritz, much cheered.

Full steam ahead Davy could have reached the nearest point of mainland shore in three hours, but there was no rush.

Buck told him to dawdle and the two humans spent a pleasant evening aboard the wooden leviathan getting better acquainted. Buck showed his quarters 'tween decks and pointed out a spare hammock that looked plenty good to DesPlessis d'Arc. They made an early night of it.

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

The poor Frogman fled incontinently.

Nothing in his life—and he perfectly well remembered the events at the hands of the Compleat Cook—could surpass in dreadfulness this rejection at the hands of his lady love. With one great shuddering bound he clove the water of the pool. The gold hat fell off and lies on the pond bottom to this day.

Away he swam with vast kicks, thrusting behind him the terrible memory of his expulsion from paradise. In moments he had crossed the body of water, sprang ashore, jumped over the enguarding hedge as if it were not there, and fled through the forest.

As he ran he blocked all recollection from his mind and forced himself feverishly to think of the future instead. He would get right away from everything that reminded him of the past. Oz! the scene of all his triumphs (ruler of the Yips, a welcome visitor at Queen Ozma's court) and defeats (his legs eaten for dinner, his heart devoured for breakfast!). He would leave Oz.

"Let's see," he figured: over the high "roof of the world," somewhere down where the Gillikin and Munchkin countries joined, there was a place where the fatal land petered out into pale blue desert. There, in the midst of the blue world, his heart would be innocent and free.

He bounded 'til dark. Fifteen-foot leaps were now as nothing to him. Anything to get away, to lose himself, to forget. He stopped only at a forest stream, to roll in the ripples and suck in great bellyfuls of water. He decimated a swarm of fruit flies that were hovering about a derelict arbor of overripe grapes. Already the grapes were rather bluish and in a few dozen more bounds he had crossed into Munchkinland.

He was resting, well lost in a nirvana of exhaustion, under a blue-gum tree when he was wakened by the sounds of revelry. Revelry?! when he hadn't met a soul all day nor

scarcely see a sign of habitation on those high ranges. But now admittedly he was getting down toward the foothills. And yet the sounds seemed to come from the way he had come: from higher, out of the west.

The edge was gone off Fred's fatigue now—and perhaps also, tinily, off his grief?—and he cocked an earhole to listen curiously, more attentively. There were some trumpeting noises and also some grunting sounds and even some honkings and whistlings. What could it be? He raised himself on an elbow and looked.

Crash! Thump! Trees were being knocked over. Some sort of juggernaut was loose! And there it came! Swinging, lurching, heaving through a thicket and out into the open: A vast purple elephant, magnificent in a gold-tasseled blanket robe and with a swaying howdah on top. At sight of the great green frog the elephant stopped with a lurch, coiled high his trunk, and let out a ferocious pachydermatological squeal.

It was the Elegant Elephant of Oz. Anyone could see that at a glance. But here, in the mountains of the Gillikin border? Well, true enough: Regalia was not all that far off. Fruakx recalled seeing a signpost: *Regalia 6 Miles* some time during the afternoon. But his impression was that Kabumpo preferred not straying very far from glamorous royal courts. "What ever...?" thought the frog.

He had no time to wonder further, for crackin' through the bracken came creatures great and small, catching up with their evident leader, the elephant. There was a giraffe and a gnu and a goose and an ostrich and an aardvark.

"Hick!" said Kabumpo. Fred Fruakx wondered more than ever.

"I beg your pardon," said he.

"I said 'Hick'...!" clarified the elephant.

"I've lived in an atmosphere of refinement all my life—

well, nearly, "protested the Frogman. "I'm definitely not a hick."

"Who said you were?" wondered Kabumpo.

"You did! Just now!"

"If I said 'Hick' it wasn't descriptive of you... Hick!"

"Stop it!" commanded Fred. "We're both celebrities of Oz. I recognize you as Kabumpo, the Elegant Elephant of Oz. This is no way to behave to a historic encounter."

"Hick?" said Kabumpo and dropped to his knees. "Sure! We're *all* celebrities of Oz. Look here—" and he drew attention, which scarcely needed to be drawn, to the curious crew who accompanied him and who now lurched and staggered and tried to stand still but failed.

"There'sh the—er, Gentle Giraffe of Oz—and the, umm, Odd Ostrich of Oz. And le'sh see: there's the—"

"Gnostic Gnu," offered the gnu itself (though in fact telling a fib) and then fell down with a swoosh.

"And finally... the Awkward Aardvark of Oz," improvised the elephant, rolling over on his side. The aardvark sang a few bars of *Libiam* and then began to snore.

"What about me?" honked the goose, who was quite colossal.

"Oh, sorry." Kabumpo opened one eye warily. "That's—uhh—the Great Grey Goose of Oz," getting one right for a change. Then Zs began to come out of his trunk and he knew no more.

The ostrich had its head down a convenient gopher hole, the giraffe was leaning against the gum tree, and the goose squatted down and put its head under its wing.

"Good lord," said the Frogman and massaged his scalp. "They're drunk!"

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

The frog-woman fled incontinently.

Still screaming, she got up and ran, not neglecting to clutch about her her flowing purple locks, which after all had not been clipped in forty years. She ran south, having perhaps already at that crisis some method in her madness. She dashed for shelter into a thicket—but soon dashed out again when she discovered the thicket was of brambles. Very soon she fetched up against the dense encircling hedge that guarded her pool from the outside world.

Gayelette screamed a little more to give herself courage, then dived into the hedge and began to burrow through. It wasn't a bramble hedge exactly but it was stiff enough to exacerbate the bramble scratches she already had. By the time she got through to the other side she was a mess.

She was dimly aware that the Frogman had taken a header into the pond. As she crawled out onto the roadway she took a guarded glance to the left and right. No one in sight; so far so good. Or so bad, actually. She could leave off screaming out of terror and disgust but otherwise what blessings were left to her?

Here was she, Gayelette, once princess regnant of all she surveyed, standing, buck-nude and forty-three years older, beside an obscure mountain valley road without a garter or a hairpin to her name. Obviously a hairpin was the first order of the day. She tripped off along the path southward: literally. She hadn't walked anywhere as a human in so long she was unused to it and kept stumbling. She tried hopping but she was no good at that anymore. Yet her feet were tough, not having had on a shoe in decades, and presently, as she got used to the rhythm of striding, she found herself putting the miles behind her. Some sturdy twigs plucked from a roadside bush served her for hairpins; at least she needn't trip