

over her own hair any longer.

Luck was with her. After a chilly afternoon in the high sierra she began to lose altitude, the nippiness in the air mildened – and then she came on a copse of clothes-trees.

There were enough to choose from, in any case. The region was singularly unpopulated and it looked as if no one ever came near the tog grove. Many of the fruits were overripe, frayed, coming open at the seams, or outright fallen to the ground and mouldering. But Gayelette found a yellow velvet farthingale that just suited her mood – which naturally was to be in everything as diametrically opposite to purple/violet as possible.

Orange pumps and a powder-blue off-the-face hat complemented her costume. Just for good measure she snatched a crimson cloak off a gnarled old cloak tree as she left the grove. An hour or two later she was grateful for it as she gathered it about her in a hollow of a river-bank and hunkered down for the night.

At the purple dawn she knew what her program was. Something within her had known from the start what direction to strike out in. Home to Tresgaie, of course: south! But by morning her thinking had matured a little and she knew that at a higher priority than a mere return to her throne was the need for vengeance against that fiend of a “Vano” saleswoman who had had the base cruelty to turn her into a frog for forty-three years – and all for no reason!

“Vano”; “Nova.” Gayelette saw the connection now. The enchantress, no doubt better to disguise herself, had simply juggled the spelling of the name of the cosmetics products she had given herself out to be hawking. A visit to Nova was the obvious immediate first step.

Gayelette put on her most gracious manner, pretended to be a society hostess who had strayed too far from the paper chase, and begged lodging at farmhouses along her way to the Amethyst City. From the last of these the farmer

even drove her into town on his cabbage cart.

Pansy Place was a former residential area that had come down in the world and now (and for a half-century past) formed the venue for a few light industries. Nova Products Limited also looked as if it had known better days. Maybe they ought to have had Gayelette as a hard-driving saleswoman forty years ago. Certainly the creature who appeared at the palace in Tresgaie hadn't done the firm any good: turning unsuspecting clients into frogs instead of satisfied customers! Gayelette could almost feel a tear of self-pity start in her eye as she pushed the buzzer.

The offices looked as down-at-heel inside as out. The little old dame in Reception looked as if she might well have been on the job the fatal day when Gayelette's seductress had set out on her mischievous journey. The restored noblewoman took a high line.

"Your representative," she stated, "traveling the mid-eastern Gillikin circuit well, admittedly forty-three years ago" (but time and age were nothing to Ozites); "I'm sorry: I didn't get her name. She introduced herself simply as 'The Nova Lady' —" (Gayelette had thought over this point and found a fib in order) "—and of course one doesn't inquire further when the salesperson of such a celebrated line calls..."

The counter woman shoved up her spectacles and looked at Gayelette wonderingly. "We do no door to door distributing," she declared surprisingly. "I've always urged it; seemed like clever policy to me; but the bosses wouldn't have it. 'It would not be in line with their carriage trade image,' they claimed. Well, you can see the result: we've been going downhill for years and years. Word-of-mouth advertising just isn't enough—"

Gayelette broke in impatiently. "Who would the person be who called at my, er, residence on 7 May 1903 (Great World Style), professing to represent your com-

pany, to interest me in some trumpery beauty preparations?"

"But, madam," protested the old woman, "how can I guess? It could be anybody!"

"No, it couldn't. Look in your poison book. Some of those preparations contain arsenic and white lead. There'd have to be a record."

"Did the person actually present items from our line?" asked the receptionist.

"What have I just been telling you? There was the whole gorgeous array in a purple shagreen case about yay long—" Gayelette demonstrated.

"Well then, madam," returned the clerk, "I'll be able to help you. All our so-named *Passion Kits* come with a serial number. A register of where or to whom they were delivered is kept. Do you know the number?"

"Four oh eight," broke in Gayelette.

"Splendid. One moment." The woman turned and pulled a battered old ledger from a shelf, blew off the dust, and leafed. "Here we are... Good heavens!"

"What is it?" Gayelette demanded in sudden alarm.

For answer the woman cocked the book around to where the princess could see it and pointed at a name.

"Mombi Maga."

"Mombi," said Gayelette thoughtfully. "That name seems somehow familiar..."

"Good gracious, madam, I should think so," said the attendant, looking a bit pale. "I'd no idea we'd ever had dealings with her. At that time, of course, she was hardly known, but later—"

"What, later?!" demanded Gayelette, forgetting in her eagerness that she had no intention of revealing to anyone that she had been out of commission for going on half a century.

"Surely you know," the woman stuttered, astonished.

"I've—uh, been abroad for a number of years," supplied

the princess lamely.

"That Mombi—it must be the same—was for a time the most feared and hated witch in Oz—"

"For a time?"

"Why, yes. Her wickedness got so out of hand at last that she had to be... done away with. That was arranged for—oh, twenty years ago now—at the court of Princess Ozma—"

"Ozma?" Gayelette asked. But her ignorance of that personage the assistant quite refused to credit. Gayelette had to persist—and climb down a bit off her high horse. "Forgive me, my good woman, but I have in fact been *quite* far away—with no news of Oz—for *quite* a long time... This Ozma: who is she?"

The assistant, who was really a rather amiable old spinster who liked a pleasant natter, brought a bottle of cordial from an inner room and shot glasses, a chair was placed for Gayelette at the counter, and the two got comfortable while Mistress Kappleson gave a condensed refresher course in Oz history.

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

"Well, if it isn't my old acquaintance Fritz Fruakx!" cried Till Orangespiegel at the door. A welcoming grin spread over his face.

"The same," admitted the Frogman. "Alas, we hardly had time to become properly friends on that fatal day when we first met, and then parted, amid such commotion."

"No, if I remember aright I ought to be holding a little grudge against you," said the once soi-distant Owl Practitioner as he indicted the way to a cool shadowy patio. "If memory serves, you were active in helping tie me up—with all the destiny-laden results that had."

"Yes, indeed," agreed Fruakx. There was no use trying to duck the facts. "But then everything came out for the best in the end, and we met as congenial acquaintances on other occasions. Let's hope it will be so also this time."

"Oh? Are there problems?" With a sign Orangespiegel directed comprehending footmen to bring refreshments: iced tea (orange pekoe, of course) and delicate crisp pale orange prawn crackers. There was a little tray of batter-fried flies as a special gesture to Fritz (as Till had always germanized the Frogman's name of Fred). The two males got comfortable in deck chairs.

"Well, yes," admitted the Frogman. "Actually this isn't only a social call, pleasant though such would be at any time, on so cordial a host as yourself. No, I'm delegated to represent others on a small diplomatic errand."

"And what might that be?" Till was really quite in the dark as to what this unannounced visit might portend.

"This little land of Unnikegwick," stated Fruakx portentously, "is making quite a name for itself in Oz as an up-and-coming bustling region which bids fair to become a specially brilliant gem in the diadem of our well beloved ruler Princess Ozma."

"Quite. Quite," said Till. All this could be taken as resounding to the credit of Governor Orangespiegel and he

preened himself accordingly.

"However," hedged the Frogman, "it appears there may be some little danger of nationalism raising its hideous head—or equally as bad: sectional rivalries. I have just been calling on the Queloo family—" (As an ex-prince, Quelala had suddenly found a surname to be a near-necessity.)

"Oh, those," dismissed Orangespiegel with a moue of impatience.

"Mmm, exactly: those pleasant and eminently civilized people. His ex-grace and I could not have agreed more on the extreme non-necessity of any rivalry between the little mercantile center of Thobdibnub and your own established capitality here at the Spherodome—which, incidentally, I notice is losing some of its sphericity as it is extended to resemble more a royal abode. Quite right and proper—I must say!—as befitting the majesty of the Queen, who may sometimes have occasion to take up her residence here briefly during visits to her Viceroy."

"Er—yes, of course," the owl practitioner concurred. He *had* a visit from Ozma a couple of years back but had scarcely had her in mind when he began regalizing his country house.

"Prince Quelala—and his charming consort—er, wife—and I deplored as cordially the activities of some malcontents in their city who seemed bent on rousing local opinion in support of a movement to declare Thobdibnub Elsqualspil capital of Unnikegwick. Quite ridiculous, of course."

"Ah, delighted to hear you say so," exclaimed Orangespiegel, who smiled broadly, quaffed largely, choked exuberantly, and grinned again.

"Nothing could rock the solidity of this very building as being the capital of the country," declared Fritz-Fred.

"I'm well gratified you feel that way," said Till—and made a mental note to call off the toughs he'd sent to

Thobdibnub.

“As a matter of fact,” the Frogman went on, “I’m a little surprised that you haven’t taken the name which every Oz precedent would indicate as fitting for your capital—with an A, that is.”

“What would that be?” Thus the Practitioner baldly acknowledged not having done the obvious.

“Why, friend!” The Frogman affected astonishment at the non-execution of an idea he himself had only had for the first time two days ago. “Have you not reflected on the name of our Emerald City, capital of Oz? Or that of ruler Glinda’s Ruby City? Or the Sapphire City, long capital of Munchkinland? Why, no region of Oz but has its royal town sparkling in name and fame with a jewel of the appropriate color—save only Unnikegwick! When the country really arrives, of course it too—”

“Today!” shouted the practitioner. “Today, this moment, I officially found and declare henceforth and forevermore the capital of the orange free state to be the Right Royal City of—er...”

The Frogman smiled. “Yes?”

Orangespiegel was looking like there was egg on his face. His expertness in all matters touching orangeness was to blame. Naturally he knew—and used freely in decoration—all gems of an orange hue. He knew them all too well—and knew there wasn’t one which was predominantly and definitively orange above all others as in the case of amethysts, pre-eminently violet, or emeralds, synonymous with green.

“Hmmp!” he said and sat down with a thump; in his enthusiasm he had risen and flung out his arms. “This will take thinking.”

“I know so little of gem-stones myself,” murmured the Frogman modestly. “In fact, I might suppose actually that topaz is nearest—”

"No, no," broke in the orangeman impatiently, "topaz can be anywhere from wine-red to green; besides, there's already a Topaz Town in the Winkies' country. Topaz..." He waxed dreamy — as one would, thinking about fabulous precious stones. "Though most often thought of by the layman as yellow, topazes come also in white, blue, tawny port, or a clear crystal form."

"The specifically orange stones would be...?"

"Well, there's chalcedony, perhaps the best-known gem that appears as orange — in which case it's called 'carneol.' Hmm, 'Carneol City.' Not bad. Like topaz, though, it's a variable. No one would describe a thing as being the color of chalcedony, because it also occurs as grey, white, blue, brown, and all shades between yellow and red: a wonderfully versatile stone, sometimes appearing almost like a petrified kaleidoscope image. Then there's *green* chalcedony, which is called 'chrysoprase.' No, appealing as the name might be, it would never automatically suggest orange."

"Well, then?"

"There's crocoite, described as yellow-red; curiously, that's how it appears: as pinkish stones that give off a yellow reflection: , not truly orange. Then there's orange corundum, which is called 'padparadscha,' outlandish word. Can you imagine anyone talking realistically about 'Padparadscha City?' No, I fear it must be thorite or wulfenite, which do often present themselves as true orange. The only trouble is: thorite can also be dark brown or black and wulfenite also a mere lemon yellow."

"A problem," agreed Fritz Fruakx.

"But I shall solve it! *!!* Till Orangespiegel, founder and only begetter of the land and of its capital!" The great Owl Practitioner got ready to make a speech, while the Frogman wondered for the first time if here wasn't a case of actual madness, a folie de grandeur, rather than just a

matter of a dash of ambition that had got out of hand. As he prepared to take his leave he slipped in, underneath Till's fireworks of grandiosity, a little diplomatic triumph.

He clapped his flipper hands as Orangespiegel ranted impressively, then said, "Of course you'll give your subjects the advantage of all your storied European background, won't you?"

"Naturally!" cried Till. Then happening to wonder just what the Frogman meant, he added, "Er—what aspect of it did you have in mind?"

"Well, you'll follow the Dutch model, I dare say?, and endow the country with two capitals. Your own palace here is of course the actual capitol and what did you decide to call it? Wulfenite City?—the true capital, as being the official place of residence of the overlord—as Amsterdam in the Netherlands."

"Quite," said Orangespiegel, to whom this was all new.

"The mere mundane business affairs of the realm, the site of the legations and trade commissions and the rest of the necessary but tedious paraphernalia of government, you'll leave at the place to which they naturally gravitate: your merely commercial city of Thobdibnub Elsqualspil... Won't you?"

"Why, yes, that seems like an equitable arrangement," admitted the Owl Practitioner, just slightly dubiously. "But now the plans," he reverted to what really interested him, "for the geographical lay-out of—hmm, Wulfenite City— it doesn't lie very liltily on the tongue, does it?"

"No, it sounds like the name of a coal-mining town in West Virginia," agreed the Frogman.

"And yet, wulfenite—" Till took up a book from the coffee table, leafed, pointed to glamorous pictures of what looked like red butterscotch in rock, and read:

"Wulfenite, the crystalline form of lead molybdate, is, without doubt, one of the most beautiful minerals. Its color

varies from yellow of an orange tint to red (when traces of chrome are present). It has a very high index of refraction and a great variation of shapes: tubular or octahedral, flat or squat...''

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

"Land ho!" yelled Buck, then handed the glass to Fritz.

The young frogman adjusted the spy-glass and squinted. "Looks rather bleak, doesn't it?"

"Oh, almost the whole coast of the Oz continent—on this side anyway—is pretty deserty," said the younger man, who now, after years, knew the territory fairly well.

"I don't see anything like a town," regretted Fritz. "There'll have to be people for there to be explosives."

"No, but a lot of this deserty part of the world belongs to the Gnome Kingdom. The life goes on underground. There it's quite thriving."

"I see. Well, we'll have to go seek out the Gnome King. One thing is for sure: He'll have blasting compounds."

"How do you know?"

"The gnomes' main industry is mining, isn't it? Chiefly gems. You can't do serious mining without blasting."

"You seem to know a lot about it," said Buck, looking at his companion quizzically.

"What? Mining? Not really, but I do know about blasting. And any layman knows miners blast."

"I was thinking more of the gnomes," corrected Buck.

"Good night, every red-blooded American boy has read the Oz Books!.. It *is* just a little unreal though to be, oneself, on the way to meet the famous Gnome King."

"It's only Kaliko, of course. Somehow I've never felt the old majordomo had the right air of regalness to be a true king."

"No, Roquat/Ruggedo was more convincing as a royal personage. Whatever became of him?"

"He suffered several dire fates, I hear tell. The last time he was turned out on a small island out in the Nonestic Ocean."

"Oh, boy, let's steer clear of that then." Fritz feigned a half-scared laugh.

"Well, actually I think his island's way around on the

other side of Nonestica. I've never been there," dismissed Buck comfortingly.

In half an hour the whale beached himself and the two men went ashore. The sand beach mounted rather steeply and from the scrub-lined heights fifty yards inland they scanned the horizon. The outlook was bare and uncompromising.

"Any idea which way to strike out?" asked the frogman.

"Not the foggiest," confessed the whaleteer. "Come on, let's go back and confer with Davy."

The whale had no contribution to make to the lore of the land exploration, but did allow himself to be mollified at the idea of waiting behind while the others went exploring.

The humans hiked inland over gradually rising ground for two hours. Then Buck said, "I'm getting hungry. Maybe we should have made a little more careful preparation before we started out. This could go on for days."

"Here." Fritz took a pinch of the guck from his dry pocket and extended the bits on the palm of his hand. "Chew a few of these. They'll tide you over."

"What are they?"

"Part of my friend the guck," explained d'Arc and told the story. "He's a kind of all-purpose acquaintance."

"In that case," said Buck, "he may come in useful now."

"How?"

"I don't know, but you said all-purpose. Maybe he has direction-finding capabilities...? Anyway he tastes all right: sort of limey, with overtones of apple."

For the nonce the men did not follow up the suggestion but plodded on doggedly. Persistence was rewarded and they came to a not insignificant river. This effectively barred their way and obliged them to turn more sharply inland and begin to ascend along the right bank.

They mounted gradually into highlands, though nothing like so high as the mountain massif of the dessert island. It was not cold, merely high and dry, like the sparsely fir-covered heights of Spain or Greece. They could pass a night there without undue shivering.

They found no Oz-type food plants, just the natural unmagical kind: olives, and some figs. Fresh olives from the tree taste horrible. One wonders how anyone ever came to experiment with them and discover that by steeping them in brine they could become a delicacy. Anyway DesPlessis d'Arc knew from his survival course that tree-ripe olives could nourish without killing and he called on his companion to swallow a few. The figs chased them very nicely indeed.

There were trees, then, as they advanced further inland. Small ones like olive and fig trees gave way to giants: eucalyptus and great cedars. It was in one of these, fallen and hollowed away with age, that they spent their first night. It was at that uncouth inn on the cliff above the green Roarogne that they first made acquaintance of the notable cohue now celebrated in story and song—especially story.

"What's that?" grunted Buck, raising his head, which lay for the time face down in a pillow of old leaves.

"Yeah, I heard it too."

"Thank gosh. Otherwise I'd think I was going crazy—or else was still asleep. I heard an elephant trumpet!"

"I heard a goose honk—but loud!"

The two young men rolled together and stuck their heads out of the log.

There was a sight for sore eyes. Coming along the trail in the blue morning light that sparkled in the dew drops was a great purple elephant in a rich blanket robe and with a shaded palanquin lurching on the top of him, in which a monstrous green-yellow frog lolled at ease. Overhead flapped an enormous goose, apparently playing the part

of pilot. Beside and behind trailed a red aardvark, a blue gnu, a green giraffe, and an orange ostrich.

"By all that's impossible!" croaked DesPlessis d'Arc. "That's the Frogman of Oz!"

Lucky Buck stared even more at his companion than at the curious troupe of travelers. "Yeah, I know. And that's Kabumpo, the Elegant Elephant. But that you know...?!"

"I'll explain in a minute," said the frogman, struggling out of the log. His cover was blown now. In a moment it was going to be futile to pretend he was not who he was.

The two ran out in to the path of the oncoming animals, who stopped to stare, at first with simple curiosity, then with growing wonderment.

"Hummpf!" snorted the elephant. "You look a lot like somebody I used to know." And he pointed his trunk accusingly at young Buck. "—only, I think, somewhat bigger now."

"And you!" croaked the frog abourn loudly, abandoning his knees-crossed ease to lean forward and peer terribly hard at the man in the wet-suit, "look alarmingly like—" But he stopped when he saw Fritz slashing with his hand peremptorily and laying an unambiguous finger across his lips. "—someone I met once," finished the frog lamely.

"Yes," cried Buck in a tizzy of old-home-week delight: "Frogman! meet the frogman!" though who was each he didn't specify.

The Frogman (with a capital F) took a great flying leap and sprang from the howdah to land directly in front of the older of the two Americans. "Isn't your name—" But again he heeded the man's warning and left the word to him.

"Fritz!" cried he of that name in spirits that matched his young companion's and seized the flipper the Frogman extended. "I have the name from you! Fritz d'Arc." And he pressed his old friend's foot again.

“Dark,” echoed the Frogman thoughtfully. “Yes, I see.”

The others were all dying of curiosity to know what this meant. So the two frogmen told them.

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

The Elegant Elephant lolled collapsed against the stone hillside where he had come to rest, and out of the howdah, still cocked askew on his back, dangled the long neck of the Great Grey Goose of Oz. That of the giraffe drooped over the lowest limb of the gum tree. The blue gnu was on its knees beside a little rivulet being delicately sick. The aardvark and the ostrich were leaning against each other, just barely managing to remain upright.

In other words, they were all “hung over.”

Fred Fruakx, on the other hand, living clean, had passed a fine night, comfortable against the warm if blotto paunch of the elephant and not even kept too long awake by regrets of the past. When the sun said nine o'clock he thought it was time to abort considerateness and get some life into the crew.

After considerable urging the elephant struggled to his feet and went to wallow, at least in part, in a somewhat broader shallow of the stream a few dozen yards off. This knocked off the howdah, which lay on the bank looking more shipwrecked than ever, and soaked his royal robe, but he returned to the company considerably refreshed.

“It was that prince I work for,” he explained. “He was going to offer me peanuts!” he snorted indignantly.

“I thought elephants liked peanuts,” inserted the Frogman mildly.

“I do. But not like that. Randy was going to institute an Order of the Golden Peanut—with me as ‘Grand Master.’ Can you imagine?: Grand Master of a peanut. I thought it was a deliberate put-down, so I told him what I thought and came away in high dudgeon—which I’ll now confess has fallen slightly lower since my setting out.”

“Was there no turning back?” inquired Fred Fruakx sympathetically.

“Are you crazy? My pride which drove me forth would never allow me to return except in triumph. At the

moment I haven't got anything much to triumph about."

"And these others?" The Frogman spread an inquiring flipper.

"Oh, companions of the road. I picked them up one by one as I went along. None of them had anything much to do and were flattered to do it in my company. I always explained just who I was, of course. But now — we're just six characters in search of an offer."

"An offer? Hmm." The Frogman himself was at a loose end that wanted tying up. "And the lack of an offer drove you to drink?"

"Oh, that. We had quite a hike over the sierra. We'd tanked up at the Gillequins' place down there in the valley, but nothing since then, and by the time we'd struggled through the rocky defiles of the highlands we were pretty spent. When we came to a nice little purple spring that I assessed as grape juice we naturally cast ourselves over it. Too late we realized it was wine, a sort of Madeira or no: more like Chateau Yquem. As luck would have it, we couldn't stop drinking even after we found out what it was."

"You're not a band of alcoholics then?" verified the Frogman. That was important to know, with regard to the idea that was forming in his head.

"I *beg* your pardon!" trumpeted the elephant indignantly.

"That's all right then. Tell me," pursued Fred, "could you think of taking a leading role in a traveling circus? — just for the nonce?"

"Certainly *not*," rejected Kabumpo. "Get myself up in pinafores in a tatty-show? You are obliged to be kidding."

"Oh, I envisioned a spectacle of the uttermost refinement; no dressing up in bathing suits or balancing on a ball. Just decorous demonstrations of how life is lived in natural surroundings by various species. Animal art forms

in action. Perhaps a little dignified ballet. That sort of thing.”

Kabumpo was mollified. In the end all the animals agreed such a strolling show would be just the thing to give a direction to their present lives. Thus was Fruakx’s Frolics reconstituted as the Animals’ Own Traveling Exhibition of Culture and Art—or AOTECA.

They played to standing-room-only in several small towns in that corner of Oz. Then they arrived at the frontier. What to do now? Turn south again? But no: All of them were in a fugue from unfaceable crises in their lives, the Frogman most of all, and they opted to get quite away from the country that had disappointed their fond hopes.

At the Caput Hotel in Headland they settled in for a stay (special facilities had to be laid on; no sleeping in barns for these troupers) and sent for Johnny Dooit⁸. “Unfortunately,” explained Kabumpo to those who didn’t know about such things, “we have no love magnet with us. Otherwise John could be here in seconds. Instead well have to send a registered letter. What’s his address again, Fred?”

“DoIt Industries Incorporated,” dictated the Frogman from memory. “By the way, I understand he’s dropped an ‘O’ and taken to pronouncing it ‘Doyt’ to rhyme with ‘quoit.’ —That’s ‘Eleven Lackluster Lane, World’s End.’ Got it?”

“Right.” The elephant indicted the letter with a quill plucked from the tail of the grey goose. They then all trooped to the post office to get the missive off. That was their little adventure for that day.

John arrived two weeks later to the dot. The laborious-looking little man in his leather apron said, “What a shame. If only I’d known. I could have been here weeks ago. And it’s about time! I haven’t had a call from Oz in forty years. How come?”

⁸ See *THE ROAD TO OZ*. Editor’s note.

"Maybe 'cause nobody had any way of reaching you in a hurry and they had no time to wait. We did."

"If that's all," said Johnny heartily, "here!" and he took from an overalls pocket a handful of leather thongs with, to each, a little tin bell attached. He gave one to each of the animals. "Whenever you've got a job of work to be done—and can't or won't do it yourself—just tinkle your bell furiously and I'll come a-runnin'."

"How so very convenient—and so very generous of you!" exclaimed the Elegant Elephant as heartily. "But—forgive me—if we wear the thong around a neck or an arm or a horn or a tail, the bell'll jingle all the time. Wouldn't it be more practical with a whistle or the like?"

"I considered that," stated Doit. "Most creatures couldn't handle a whistle to their lips. Anybody can tinkle a bell. That's why I stipulated 'furiously'; my sensors won't react until a bell tinkles deliberately hard and persistently."

"But now to cases! What can I do for you?"

"We're on this here pil'mage," explained the Ardent Aardvark (which in fact was her title). She was so enthusiastic!—and had had the misfortune to fall in love not wisely but too well. Now she was fleeing from a broken heart. "We gotta get over the desert at all costs. Can you do us a sand boat? King-size?"

"Which can be guided by handless creatures?" added the Nude Gnu (in French, 'le Gnou Nu'). Not that he was nakeder than other gnus, but he *did* refuse to get dressed up, even on formal occasions. It was his only distinguishing characteristic.

"I think I can just manage," replied Johnny Doit with a twinkle.

They checked out of the hotel and walked to a small forest just at the edge of a great desert. Johnny had zapped on ahead with his tool chest and by the time the others arrived he already had the double keel for the giant boat laid.

The animals watched with interest. It was a big job but even so Johnny Doit had done it by sundown. The Frogman, who knew the story of Dorothy Gale's journey by sand boat, was provident enough to ask, "How do we stop it when it's got a good head of wind up?"

John showed various buttons, bars, and levers they could touch so that at journey's end the boat needn't necessarily become a pile of kindling as Dorothy's had done.

"Nice," praised Fred. "My congratulations, Mr. Doyt," he said carefully. Johnny beamed. "It's a trim craft. Entirely sandworthy, I don't doubt. Yet very much a boat. I wonder..."

"Yes?" said Doit.

"Would it serve on water as well? I mean, its wooden construction—and the wind propulsion...?"

"I should have mentioned! It'll go anywhere—provided there's wind. You do have to have wind. But the ozinium keel-blades will pass over sand or soil, even rock, or snow and ice. Just don't try to ride through a forest! You'll come to grief."

Then Johnny shook hooves, or equivalent, all round and was gone in a flash.

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

“Your lovely Majesty!” cried Princess Gayelette enthusiastically and dropped a deep curtsy.

“Do rise, your grace,” insisted Ozma Queen of Ozzes. “I am very happy to see you—and very sorry indeed that you should have had to endure so long an exile. If only I had known—! It was all before my time, of course.”

“Was it indeed, your highness?” queried Gayelette, disguising her deep earnest with genial smiles and gestures of esteem. “I have just recently had the good fortune to be provided with some glimpses into your history and learn that you appeared in the Emerald City just a fortnight after the never-to-be-forgotten date of my bewitchment. Also I was astonished to learn that you had been living for some time with the subtle enchantress Mombi. I have been very puzzled to account for the good woman’s animus towards me—who had, really!, never even heard of her. She’s gone now, of course—and far be it from me in any case to think of plans for retribution. But if I could just gain some inkling as to *why*—for pity’s sake...”

Then Ozma, before she had time to consider all aspects, allowed herself to be led into an indiscretion. The woman before her seemed so earnest and respectful that the young queen desired to express sympathy and she said, “If only I could help! But I have not the slightest idea. I never saw Mombi again, at least in my Tip persona, except for two brief occasions, after her visit by the King of the Winged Monkeys—”

“Ah!” said Gayelette. That was all. The whole case lay before her now like an open book. Instantly she dropped the subject and was clever enough to soothe Ozma’s misgivings by beginning to talk of her disappointment in finding herself no longer ruler of Tresgaie. “But how wonderful for me!” she cried, “to learn that my own dear child Prince Gay-Lala was upon my—er, the throne. I look forward to many happy days in his company.”

Ozma beamed. "Your reunion with him must have been joyous!" (You could tell she sure didn't know Gayelette if she thought that.)

"Alas, exclaimed the princess, "that happy time must be prolonged." (She used the word in Shakespeare's way.) "I feared to give distress by any hint of my own distress. For I also hear that my beloved husband is another's. I have not yet learned to cope with that shipwreck of hopes. I must have time to study to bear my loss before I face those who cannot but realize..."

"I am so very sorry," said Ozma, quite heartfelt. Here before her was a woman, still apparently in her best years, who had lost throne and husband and all and yet seemed to be accepting with grace and resignation that which would have crushed a lesser mortal. "Is there anything I can do?"

"Your highness is most gracious. No, nothing. I believe I shall go into retreat for a period. I must have time to adjust to all this. Then I shall have a look at the help wanted columns." She tried to put a light-hearted vulgar sparkle on the somber talk.

In fact, Gayelette was in a frenzy to be off. She rejected (courteously) all Ozma's offers of hospitality and help and took a hasty farewell. She did, however, ask for the loan of a scalawagon, saying she would return it in person. She left no forwarding address.

Then she was off like the wind, driving furiously over hill and dale to distant Tresgaie.

There she had again to rein in her passions and appear to Prince Gay-Lala (who had never married, and who looked old enough to be her father) to be merely overjoyed at her son's elevation. He wanted to throw fêtes and garden parties in her honor but she would have none of it.

"One thing. By chance," she inquired, "Is there just the tiniest possibility that my old magic cabinet has been kept

intact?"

"But, mother!" cried the prince, all cordiality, "what do you take us for? Father had your apartments sealed and preserved, down to the smallest detail, exactly as you left them: A sort of memorial to you, you see."

"I should like to pass one night amid the old scenes." That was Gayelette's one request.

By the three o'clock moon the ex-princess regnant could have been seen carrying down to the scalawagon pickup cartons and cartons of her belongings. She made a dawn departure, leaving Prince Gay-Lala somewhat miffed and suspecting that his mother's joy in his exaltation had scarcely been sincere.

It was only some forty-five minutes run to the forest where the Winged Monkeys had—and presumably still—lived. With their enemy, Princess Gayelette, safely disposed of, why should they have felt any need to up the stakes?

Gayelette pulled in under a concealing grape arbor and cut the motor. She had out the top carton and scabbled 'til she found her gnarled hexing staff. With it she did two things: erected a weatherproof shelter, under the leaves and over the scalawagon with its precious freight: and turned herself into a very brilliantly colored hummingbird. Then she flew off in search of the monkeys.

The sorceress' plan was this: With her brilliant plumage she would attract the attention of the apes, who in their fun-loving way would try to catch the bright bird and pull it to pieces. She meant to fly slow enough for them to have ambitions of netting her in the end but not so slow that they might actually do so.

Among her intended victims would be the monkey king. With him in her train she would flutter back to the shelter under the arbor, then in a flash resume her proper form, seize her wand, and turn him to stone. To the other monkeys she would deliver an ultimatum: "Go! Call in all

other members of your tribe wherever they may be. Assemble here, at the arbor. After that we shall discuss what may be done. It is possible that if you obey my instructions to the letter I shall be merciful to your king..."

After forty-three years' exile and degradation? Not so blooming likely.

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - F O U R

The Frogman, wearing his gold hat, modestly declaimed any other recognition for his diplomatic masterstroke and took his farewell of the Queloo family. He and his troupe moved on, to face, alas, horrors of which we know, and which put an end to the traveling sideshow that had delighted thousands for a quarter of a century.

His work lived on. When city councilor Quelala Queloo announced from the balcony of the palace of Mon Désir to the massed citizenry that their town was now, de jure as well as de facto, the diplomatic Seat of Government, the rejoicing was intense. The mob cheered and waved their flags (an orange field with, superimposed in black-brown, the honey keg of the Unnikegs) and screamed the name of Quelala, to whom they naturally attributed responsibility for the prestige coup. The Frogman had asked that his name not be mentioned—to what end?—after all. So Quelala took a brief bow, made an even briefer speech disclaiming all credit (without saying whom to give the credit to), and retired from the balcony in confusion.

“Gnats,” said he. “It’s awkward. I don’t enjoy undeserved praise.”

“They want to praise somebody for it,” insisted his loving wife. “You’d better give them a name, otherwise it’s going to be you.”

“But whose? Dear old Fred Frog said definitely not to allude to him... What about you, sir?” And Quelala turned to his father-in-law, who enjoyed all the glory accruing to his family.

“Well,” hesitated the old boy. “I did head up that delegation that waited on Queen Ozma—” But then he caught sight of his daughter’s querying face and hastily decided that no, he no more than Quelala enjoyed unearned praise. “No!” he said shortly. “But what if you were to throw a sop to your rival, the awful Orangespiegel? It

was his acquiescence that made possible the current triumph, without strife."

"My rival?" echoed Quelala. "In what? I don't want any public acclamation, any glory. I've been down that road... But your idea's a good one, Dad. What do you think, dear?"

Dayna found her father's suggestion an admirable solution to a tiresome problem and she gave the dad's arm a squeeze as she turned to Quelala and heartily assented.

The prince stepped back out on the balcony and raised his hands for quiet. "My fellow citizens," he declaimed. "You all desire, I know, to give praise where it is due. Therefore let me lose no time in stating to you that the author of all our felicity, he without whose blessing the capitality of Thobdibnub Elsqualspil would never have been achieved, is none other than our beloved Royal Governor, Lord Orangespiegel" (a title distributed by a grateful queen for the Owl Practitioner's acquiescence in a program that might otherwise have aroused troublesome animosity).

There was an instant of silence by the crowd, then a loud Boo! rang out and was immediately followed by a tidal wave of jeers and catcalls. The Governor was not popular in Thobdibnub; never had been and when word got around of who the trouble-makers had been who lately had been instigating riots in the town, his popular stock fell to zero.

Prince Quelala hastily withdrew from public view and hoped the affair, with time, would just blow over. To some extent it did, as the populace got busy hanging up the arms of Unnikegwick in every suitable location in the town and erecting triumphal arches at all the city gates, on which was inscribed "Entering Thobdibnub Elsqualspil, capital of Unnikegwick. Drive carefully."

Of course Till Orangespiegel was furious when he got the news. For a moment he thought of declaring war on Thobdibnub Elsqualspil but then he recalled that he had no

army or even any hydrogen bombs and if he tried to destroy his rivals by magic his mentors Princess Ozma and Sorceress Glinda would, with much more powerful magic, land on him like ducks on a June-bug.

Furiously he threw himself with redoubled vigor into making the Wulfenite City a worthy rival to the upstart town farther north. But like Canberra or Brasilia in their early years the Wulfenite City remained a dream in a desert. The broad avenues stayed untrafficked, the well-planned houses uninhabited. Nobody wanted to come live near Till Orangespiegel in a drawingboard city in a more-or-less wilderness. The years passed away as the Practitioner twisted and turned, trying to think of some way to attract immigrants to the (other) capital, population: eleven.

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - F I V E

“So where is the sand-boat now?” young Bucky demanded to know.

“As Doit explained, it’s no use in a forest,” the Elegant Elephant replied. “As it happens, we also found out it’s not much good up steep hillsides either. We left it at the foot of the rising ground—oh, quite a ways back.”

“And where are you on your way to?” put in DesPlessis d’Arc.

“The people at Nole, where we played last, told us the Gnome King is in residence at his eastern palace just now, so we thought we’d put in a call there. If he’s having one of his good days he might enjoy seeing our act. It’ll be good for a bushel or two of carbuncles and peridots.”

The two Americans looked at each other and gave way to big smiles. “If he’s in a good humor!” paraphrased d’Arc somewhat unmotivatedly. Then he motivated it: “That’s just where we’re heading. But we didn’t know enough to be uneasy until you said so. Why? What’s he like when he’s having a bad day?”

“He’s psychotic!” explained Kabumpo. “There seems to be some powerful agency at work on underground regality. *Whoever* is King of the Gnomes appears to alternate manically between good nature and extreme malevolence. Even old Roquat/Ruggedo—remember him?—” Both men nodded. “—was genial as could be all the way up to chapter seventeen of *Ozma of Oz*, when he suddenly determined, it seems, to be a villain—and has remained so ever since. Now Kaliko, the former Chief Steward, who is king at present, was amiable and considerate in all his dealings with outsiders right until he became king. After that he grew a beard and a paunch like his predecessor and began to behave as treacherously and cruelly as old Ruggedo.”

“Could it be a case of power corrupting absolutely?” wondered d’Arc.

“Well, not absolutely,” demurred the elephant, “because travelers still tell of arriving at Gnomibia East—or West—to be met with the utmost courtesy and hospitality. You just never know.”

“We’ve gotta face him in any case,” told d’Arc. “I don’t believe there’s another place on the continent where we can get the blasting compounds we need.”

“Then avanti!” urged the elephant, determining to prove valiant, and began to lumber forward.

Only “Hey!” broke in Lucky Buck, “we just came that way. I thought you said the eastern gnome home was west. That path leads back down to the sea.”

Kabumpo harrumphed and conferred with Fred Fruakx.

“The Noleans,” assured the latter, “said to keep to the left along this trail and we haven’t turned right yet.”

Somewhat wondering, the two men collected their few impedimenta and followed. A few yards on the mystery was explained: The cliff-top path, following the river bends, turned rather sharply west—and continued to rise, as the stream narrowed and became a little rocky torrent hurtling down in splashes of white water.

An hour’s further gradual climbing, with the stream left behind, and then they came to a place where the path looked more cared-for, the footway changed from bare earth or gravel to steps hewn in the living rock, and every few paces upward the verges were bedizened with turquoises or lapis lazuli anchored in the stone.

They ascended to a point where the earth surface bulged to a dome effect and there was a green jadeite door set in the rock. In a slot beside it was a good-sized placard on which was lettered in metallic brown:

“ABANDON SOAP, ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE!”

They had a good laugh at that and Kabumpo said, “It must be one of his good days, putting out that kind of joke

greeting."

But Buck chose to treat the sign seriously. "Is he dirty? Don't they take baths?"

Kabumpo replied, "I hardly know. I never really thought about it. I don't suppose they do. They are always grey with rock dust, the lot of them. And I remember hearing that the old king, Ruggedo, didn't enjoy it at all the times he was immersed in the Fountain of Oblivion or other bodies of water..."

The talk got no further because just then the jadeite door popped ajar, a hand reached out and snatched the sign, thrust another in its place, and slammed the door again.

The startled crowd read "**NO ADMITTANCE UNTIL WEEK AFTER NEXT.**"

This brought a laugh too, but a wry one. "They must have seen us coming," snorted the elephant.

"Not very original," said DesPlessis d'Arc. "Alice, I think," he went on cryptically.

"We let that stop us?" asked Fred the Frog, put on the defensive by hearing of people who didn't like the nicest thing in the world, a comfortable pond.

"No; we daren't," insisted the other frogman. "Lord Kabumpo, please lean on the bell."

The elephant gladly did as requested and when a doorbell got leaned on by him it got *leaned* on. The jadeite door flew open, wide this time, and a pewskéd gnomish head stuck out, its hands against its ears. "Less loud!! Less loud! Less loud pleeeze! Our ears!" it wailed.

"Is His Majesty receiving today?" inquired the Elegant Elephant genially.

"Can't you read?!" For extra silence the gnome's eyes were also tight shut but now one popped open and a hand shot out to point at the placard. "Not for weeks and weeks!" The hand made to pull the door to again but Kabumpo's foot was in it and *that* was a *foot*.

"Why?" asked the elephant blandly.

"He's got the sweet-toothache."

"Oh, that's bad," put in Fritz d'Arc, who had experience of old-fashioned dentists. "Please convey the king our sympathies. Been eating too many sweets, has he?"

"No, not enough! In fact, none at all. The Purveyor to the Palace never turned up this week. Naturally his sweet tooth only aches when it's undernourished!" The gnome clearly thought the intruders were awfully ignorant, not to say stupid.

At least one of them was not. "I can cure your king in a trice!" he said rapidly. "Bring us to him."

That mollified the gnome attendant remarkably. He swung the door wide and invited them all to enter.

The gesture was gratifying, but alas! it couldn't include the elephant and the Genial Giraffe. There was *some* limit to what would go down the subterranean passage. The Australian Ostrich could just *barely* clear.

"Never mind," soothed Buck and clapped the elephant's snout. "If Davy was here, he couldn't go in either."

Kabumpo was not sure *that* made it all right but he just smiled wistfully and said, "We'll get by. I've got Gene here for company." But to himself he wondered how these commoners would fare in the presence of royalty. The situation really required the ministrations of a Prince's Own Pachyderm.

As the admitted part of the party proceeded along rock passage ways the gnome servitor, now quite affable, enlightened them (also with a lantern): "Yes, you see, gnome agriculture is in a deplorable state, totally undeveloped. We have only a few mushroom chambers. But of course everything sweet to eat, known to gnome, is of vegetable-origin. Even coal tar derivatives are in the last analysis vegetable.

"So we're dependent on the outside world for such com-

modities. Our own home-produced menu is limited to hornblende hash and fried gneiss—with all too often just mud pies for dessert. And when a lazy scoundrel like that caterer from Ix City stays away...” The gnome subsided in inarticulate mumbles.

Twelve minute’s walk brought them to the Gnome King’s apartments. His Highness received the visitors not sitting on his throne but lying cushioned and quilted on a chaise lounge, his head wrapped in a towel; and his greeting was a groan.

After the formalities the first thing DesPlessis d’Arc said was, “Is there a little water?”

The gnome attendant pointed, then led the way to a piscina let into the wall, which carried away some of the moisture that inevitably dripped down the walls of the cave. d’Arc took something from his pocket, then held his cupped hands under the steady slow drip.

In a moment the onlookers could see a sort of movement in the man’s hands and in another moment he had flung them wide apart and what they had held splashed to the stone floor, where they hopped and bounced inordinately. Soon the viewers could make out tiny creatures that rushed about frenetically, crashing into each other, coalescing, and growing!

It was the gucklets or gucklings—and they continued their careening career until the entire lot of them had swollen vastly and adhered to each other, becoming at last one monstrous amorphous whitey-green shape that filled virtually every cranny of the rock chamber not already occupied.

While all the rest wondered, young d’Arc ducked under an overhanging flab, grabbed a fistful of the being, and thrust it into the Gnome King’s face. At that moment a creaky voice issuing from somewhere said, again, “Pleased to me chew.”

King Kaliko could scarcely do less. He pulled aside his jaw-swallowing towel and took a tentative nibble at a pinch of the guck. Then his face brightened.

“Like sweet thin cider – with an overtone of lime,” he analyzed – and made an eager grab at more of his guest.

As he chewed away happily, the others, realizing they too felt a bit peckish, pulled off handfuls of the jelly creature and stuffed their faces. In ten minutes they had the poor guck eaten down to size, but he seemed merely pleased at his popularity and murmured modestly, “From that where always more there’s came.”

“Wherever did you get him?” queried Fred Fruakx admiringly, and “What a convenient thing to have along!” exclaimed the aardvark.

“Yes,” agreed Fritz; “it’s a guck,” and briefly recounted how he had met and taken possession of his friend. “I begin to realize: One should never leave home without one!”

King Kaliko had thrown off his towel, cast aside the eiderdown, and now sprang to his feet energetically. “Let’s go to the audience room,” he cried jauntily, “where we can talk more comfortably.” He clapped DesPlessis on the back. “That really did the trick. I feel marvelous... And what, I pray, can I do for you in return?”

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

Princess Gayelette was as good as her word. After her triumph over the Winged Monkeys she felt spiritually replete for a time, but still not up to encountering her ex- (or, to her, still) husband, and she “went into retreat.” She took a cottage on the south shore of Lake Quad and spent a number of weeks just fishing, swimming, and sunbathing. Somehow these things seemed to delight her now, where formerly as a princess regnant she would never have thought of getting her feet wet.

There was another word she had given as well. That was to return the scalawagon she had borrowed from the royal garage at the Palace of Magic. When her holiday was over and she no longer needed the jitney for running to the store, she packed up her few belongings and drove ‘round to the Emerald City.

“Sit down, my dear, do,” said Ozma, with an abstracted gesture at an emerald-green ottoman. As a princess Gayelette was allowed to be seated in the queen’s presence.

“And how do I find Your Majesty?” inquired Gayelette courteously.

“Well—but worried,” admitted Ozma.

“Oh, dear, I’m sorry... Er, may I know?”

“Why, yes, of course. You know Glinda?”

“Your Majesty’s vicereine of the southern province. Of course.”

“Glinda functions also as our sort of intelligence bureau. I’ve just had a call from her. It’s rather troublesome. It seems... But then: I’m not sure how thoroughly you’ve been brought up to date on developments in Oz since the time of your unfortunate transformation...?”

“Oh, old Madame Kappleson briefed me on all the major heads, I think,” said Gayelette. “What do you refer to?”

“Were you aware that dying has gone quite out of style

in Oz?" asked the queen with a wry smile. "I mean, there's no such thing as death here any more. Since the very early years of the century there has not been a single verifiable case of any living thing's dying..."

"Mistress Kappleson did say something about that. And then of course it was already beginning to be talked of when I still reigned at Tresgaie. I remember a case of one of our under-gardeners who injured himself most terribly with his secateurs. He bled dreadfully—*quite* enough to have caused decease. But he didn't die. Suffered frightfully, of course, and *pleaded* to be allowed to expire. That made some of us reflect afterwards that his must have been a suicide bid. (He was forty and unmarried, so we can guess the reason.)

"But there was nothing we could do. He was rushed to surgery—but it had been some time before he was found. The surgeons did what they could but the man lived. Deeply unconscious for weeks, but it seemed that when there was no more blood to bleed the bleeding stopped. Miraculously the wounds healed and eventually he regained his senses. I suppose the body manufactured new blood and when I last knew of the case the fellow was working resignedly in the palace gardens as before. He didn't try that again."

"Edifying," said Ozma, but she may have spoken ironically. "Yes, it's been like that all over—and there have been some extraordinary occurrences. Historians have looked on the bright side and praised the wonderful 'immortality' of life here, and of course there have been delightful incidents, such as the case of our dear Tin Woodman who cut himself so grievously—and repeatedly—but was saved through the ministrations of a clever tinsmith. Incidentally, that smith has been worked overtime ever since he patented his method for attaching metal prostheses. I understand there's a whole tribe of tin mailmen, tin fire-

men, tin dustmen, tin milkmen, eteceras, in that part of the Munchkin Country nowadays.

"But one tinsmith couldn't cope, of course..."

"What do you mean, your grace?" said Gayelette with awe, struck by something in Ozma's tone.

"There not being any death hasn't of course meant that frightful accidents have not continued to occur. There are dozens of those every day. But what of the effects? In most cases naturally friends or relations rush an accident victim to a physician, who does some stitches and, with the new deathlessness, most patients continue to live on more or less normally after recovery.

"But what of persons—and especially of all the animal life—that cannot get help, that suffer alone, unfound, in deserted corners of the country?..." Ozma paused.

"Gracious," exclaimed Princess Gayelette. "I've never thought. One never *sees* any such poor suffering creatures...?"

"Just so. *I* never thought—and it was a gross oversight on my part," said the little queen, looking as grave and self-reproachful as anyone had ever seen her. "One *doesn't* see them, and in my folly I never asked why. One tended to equate deathlessness with 'injurilessness,' I suppose. But that's not tenable.

"That's what Glinda's call was about. Apparently people *are* starting to see dismembered animals lying about; even occasionally a human being who's come to grief. We don't know what's happened. Has there been a sudden upsurge of awful accidents? Or has whatever agency formerly functioned in such matters stopped operating? You see, we none of us know how the problem was dealt with before. But Glinda is now going all-out researching in her records to see if she can get any clue.

"I should really go to her..."

"Oh, do, your majesty," said Gayelette earnestly.

“...And—er, could I perhaps accompany you? I’d like so much to feel useful in any way at all. My life, sadly, is suddenly quite empty.”

“By all means,” exclaimed Ozma and smiled for the first time since they had met. “It will be a comfort to me to have your support. Dorothy and the others will want to help, of course, but they’re just little girls. I feel the need of a mature person for counsel in this grave matter.”

Their plans were soon made. They shook off, lovingly, the insinuations of Dorothy, Betsy, and Trot, and presently boarded the red wagon, just the two of them, giddapped to the Sawhorse, and were off to the south.

CHAPTER TWENTY - SEVEN

Governor Orangespiegel now had thirty-eight people living at the Wulfenite City. Somehow the place just hadn't caught on—anything but the name. Governor Orangespiegel's fury knew no bounds when he learned that there was a small but intent faction at Thobdibnub Elsqualspil in favor of jettisoning the ancient but ungainly and—let's face it—ugly name of their town and replacing it with "Wulfenite City!" That would be no gain in charm of nomenclature but it would certainly yank the rug from under any continuing pretensions of the Owl Practitioner to claim leadership in the country.

"Who steals my name steals cash!" cried Till in a passion, forgetting for a moment that money hadn't been used in Oz since very early in the century. "I won't allow it!"

But what could he do? Oz was a democracy, although a kingdom, and when a referendum was launched throughout the province by the powers-that-were in Thobdibnub to determine popular preference in the matter, he had to go along with the project. He traveled the length and breadth of the country campaigning to defeat the measure. He promised unheard-of rewards to all who would vote *No* to a change of city name and furthermore flit to *his* Wulfenite City to swell the population.

What was the result? Twenty-nine thousand seven-hundred seventy-two citizens voted for Thobdibnub Elsqualspil to become Wulfenite City, twentynine thousand seven-hundred seventy-one against. Then Orangespiegel learned that there had been chicanery at the polls.

It was Till's custom every morning to take a stroll through the streets of his (virtually) uninhabited model city, which lay just outside the grounds of his own estate, to the south, nearly filling the space between the spherodome and the storied ruin of the great mirror standard⁹.

⁹ See *THE MAGIC MIRROR OF OZ*. Editor's note.

What were his shock and amazement one morning to find the town no longer virtually uninhabited but absolutely so. When he knocked at the door of the mayor's house he heard the only sound he had heard all morning: A scuttling noise, then a slam, which made his thoughts at once fly to the mayor's *back* door. Till stepped aside and looked along the length of the house.

Sure enough, there was the scuttler, hurrying down the back garden path with a suitcase in his hand. "Hey!" yelled Orangespiegel informally and ran after him. He caught the culprit by the coattails just as he was leaping over the picket fence. "Where are you off to?!"

The mayor turned and hemmed and hawed. Finally he spat it out. "I've been invited to be mayor of the Wulfenite City—if I'd bring the name with me."

"You already *are* mayor of the Wulfenite City!"

"But I mean *the* Wulfenite City, as Thobdibnub's being renamed."

"Oh, base ingratitude!... Still—if you got a better offer...?"

"We did. The referendum was too close. The ringleaders at Thobdibnub Elsqualspil sent word that if the entire population of *this* Wulfenite City moved to Thob nobody could have a word to say about the name going with us. The name of a town is after all that of the people who live there, not merely of the bricks and stones that make up the buildings."

"All my chicks and their damned mayor in one swell foop?" mourned Till. "I'll not abide it! I'll go see Glinda about it. *She'll* side with me. Tomorrow, at the Ruby City, I'll think of some way to get them back. After all, tomorrow is another day."

"Don't bother," said the mayor, callously throwing a bucket of water over Till's hopes. "We're doing another referendum and this one's sure to succeed. We're electing

an own independent High King of Unnikegwick. He'll exercise supreme command in the province. Sorceresses from other countries will have no say here."

And with that the once and future mayor hopped over the fence and disappeared in a coppice on his way to the bus station.

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

Davy Jones was weeping again. The wooden tears were thumping people right and left before they rolled away and came to rest on the sugar sands.

“Have a heart, Dave,” pleaded Buck. “You can see for yourself how impossible it would be for you to go up the mountain with us.”

“But why?!” wailed the whale. “I crossed the Deadly Desert and lived to tell the tale. I’ve swum all the tiniest brooks of Oz successfully. I’m the first and only whale to have visited the Emerald City. Ozma herself doesn’t even have a whale in her aquarium in Lake Quad. The nearest she came was a dolphin, and even that turned out afterwards never to have existed¹⁰.”

“Granted,” admitted Buck. “But what’s all that got to do with your trying to climb a mountain?”

“I want to go down in history as the first mountain-climbing whale. No whale eye has ever, in the history of the world, looked out on the prospect from a mountain top. I want to have that thrill!—before I sink.” The whale sobbed fit to break hearts.

The others all stood around in an arc on the granulated strand and looked non-plussed. The thing was impossible! Transport a whale up the rock candy mountain?! Or was it? DesPlessis d’Arc looked at the Frogman and they both exchanged glances with Kabumpo, who shrugged his shoulders (not the easiest thing in the world when you’re an elephant).

“Of course the tradition for *elephants* climbing mountains is most ancient,” pontificated the elegant one, and everyone thought of Hannibal. “But I must say I’ve never heard of whales ascending—or, for that matter, even giraffes—” and he glanced askance at Gene.

“Don’t you believe it,” protested the Genial Giraffe. “What about the Great Giraffe Hegira of the year 1201 up

¹⁰ See *THE GREEN DOLPHIN OF OZ*. Editor’s note.

Kilimanjaro? That's in every giraffling's cycle of bedtime stories."

"Oh," said Kabumpo, chastened. "I don't know African history that well—except elephants'... But even so, a whale...?"

"It *could* be done," admitted d'Arc, "though it would take forever. See that promontory where the bay ends?" He pointed and they all gazed. "You notice the ridge runs unusually evenly all the way up to the peak. Once we get some means of locomotion under the whale it might be *possible* to shove him to the top. But, boy, what a struggle."

The other Frogman was pensive. "How heavy is Davy?" he asked.

"Not as heavy as he looks," Buck put in eagerly. "You've ridden in him. You know he's hollow: Just a three-inch eleven-ply wooden shell. He actually only weights three tons and a bit."

"I can shift four tons," stated Kabumpo matter-of-factly. "Admittedly not up-hill."

"Well," went on Fred Fruakx, "these tears of his—" He picked up a basketball-sized sphere from the beach and hefted it. "*They're* not hollow! And they look like good firm water-oak, if I'm any judge. They could bear a lot..."

"What've you got in mind, Fritz?" said the other Fritz.

"If we had a *lot* of these," explained Fruakx, "and strung 'em on ropes like necklaces, then made a carpet of them, and wrapped it around a platform, on the principle of a tank's treads—well, we could roll a pretty big object pretty far."

Those of a mechanical turn of mind envisioned at once what he was talking about and got excited.

"You'd need a *double* platform," amended Fritz d'Arc, "one for the ballbearing treads to revolve around and one to do the actual supporting of the whale."

"And steel brackets to hold the two together but apart,"

put in the gnu.

Now everybody got into the act. "Lots of rope," said the goose, "or: More like heavy wire cable."

"Yeah, and a lifetime supply of the balls—oh, balls!" exclaimed Buck and looked at the whale accusingly. "Davy, you've stopped crying!"

"I'm too excited to cry!" cried Davy Jones. "It all sounds too wonderful. I can't wait to start!"

"Well, you're not going," announced his friend in a cold callous voice. "Come on, gang! No use hanging around. We'll start at once."

This took everyone by surprise and there were a lot of "but"s and "well"s until Buck went to his compatriot and whispered in his ear. At that Fritz's face went merry-grave and he too commanded, tongue in cheek: "Right, men, fall in line. Guck and I first, frog and elephant right behind—" etcetera, etcetera.

Away marched the whole troop along the strand, leaving poor Davy Jones all alone, with sadly fallen crest. The group passed on out of sight behind some Brighton-rock boulders—and there stopped, unseen by the whale. They peered out round the edges of the rocks to see what Davy was doing.

He was crying, of course. The big tears rained down and rolled off along the beach. It was just too cruel. To get his hopes of the ultimate thrill to raised, only to have them dashed to the ground and trampled on. For the others to march away without a word of explanation and not even saving goodbye! No whale ever felt more rejected and abandoned than Davy Jones felt at that moment.

His sobs increased, rocking his whole body and gently launching him off the sands. When he found himself water-borne he rolled on his side in an access of self-pity and drifted there exactly like a beached whale committing suicide.

All at once young Lucky Bucky came pelting along the beach and stood, fists on hips, yelling: "Davy Jones! Get your rear back up on shore here! Come on! Right straight up on the sand. And see you don't stir an inch from there! We'll need you when we get back."

Then Buck walked off again to rejoin his hidden companions. "Stupid thing!" he muttered. "The tears were all starting to float away on the tide."