

CHAPTER TWENTY - NINE

Glinda the Good, red Sorceress of the South, ruler of the Quadlings, and Witch Emerita (honorary degree recently conferred by the College of Knowledge, Professor H.M. Wogglebug, T.E., president), was sitting in her library/study, where, indeed, she spent a great deal of her time. There was located the "Glinda's Book of Records," so often imitated out in the great world. She had read every line in it (and there were many) that had appeared for the last one and a half months.

Now she slouched back in her chair and lit a cherry dope stick (innocuous time-passer which provided the 'smoker' with a pleasant taste of warm cherry pie and cast a faint scent of the fruit on the air). Nothing! Oh, there were dozens of incidents recorded which she probably ought to do something about; that affair of the entire race of the Winged Monkeys being turned to stone was perhaps the worst and could not long be put off being dealt with; but there was *nothing* which gave a clue to the current wave of dreadful accidents. *Or rather*, she said to herself, *being always in her own mind scrupulously exact, of evidences of accidents becoming so noticeable...*

But, goodness gracious, there's been the odd accident before in history! One was never aware of the presence of dismembered or terribly disfigured bodies lying about. But now I wonder: What in Oz did happen to such... for such there obviously were.

She puffed on until her stick was finished and then with a sigh returned to her fruitless labors. She had one idea in mind and though it offered wearisome possibilities they *were* possibilities. She would go back to, say, 1905 and begin looking up references to all atrocious accidents.

Deathlessness where, however, death might have been imminently expected had been known of in Oz since about 1897 (by great-world reckoning; 1166 O.Z.) but only patchily, here and there around the country. Now if one were to search out people who'd been involved with would-be-

death-dealing accidents from, say, about 1903, from which date immortality seemed to be general in Oz, one might make diplomatic inquiry and find out just what was believed to have happened to charred but living remains of people or half-drowned animals in field and forest.

It was rather a grim matter to be doing an enquête about but it looked to Glinda like the only way. She'd plan the procedure, then get the Minute Maid and some of the others to carry out the work in shifts round the clock. With another sigh the sorceress started to work.

There was a knock at the door and she looked up with relief. "Her Majesty Princess Ozma of Oz," announced the Minute Maid, throwing wide the door.

Two young(ish) women entered the library, one all in white, the other in yellow velvet. "Glinda, my dear!" said Ozma, coming forward with outstretched hands. "I couldn't stay away. We must get this unseemly matter straightened out. But first, may I present the Dowager Princess Gayelette, once ruler of Tresgaie?"

Witch Glinda smiled with a deep feeling of satisfaction. *Here* was a stroke of luck.

"Charmed, I'm sure," she exclaimed, perhaps just slightly exaggeratedly for her. "Not princess only, I rather think, but also accomplished sorceress...?"

Gayelette blushed. Of course it was all right now. Rules in recent years had been relaxed notably, but toward the end of the time when the ruler of Tresgaie had been most active in necromancy such had been strictly forbidden in Oz except in the case of a very few licensed adepts, of whom Gayelette was all too aware she herself was not one.

"Just in a very small way, your grace," lied the Gillikin sorceress, forgetting that Glinda had access to knowledge of *everything* that went on in Oz, even, alas, secrets of the bedchamber.

But the Quadling sorceress was pleased. It lightened in a sense her feeling of awkwardness at having to tax the ex-ruler with a serious violation of the law, indeed, an outright misdemeanor.

"As it happens, your princely highness," said Glinda, graciously indicating chairs for the ladies to occupy, "in the course of researches I've just been doing involving the Book of Records I came across an insertion that does, I fear, tend to vitiate the strength of your assertion."

Glinda then spoke into an address system whose transmitter was located at the front of the great lectern on which rested the Book. She ordered up tomato juice with just a hint of something stronger in it. Then she turned a leaf in the big volume, her finger ran down a column, and she quoted:

" 'Former Princess Regnant Gayelette of Tresgaie has turned all but four of the Winged Monkeys to stone.' "

She glanced up at the continuously blushing Gillikina with a faint ironical smile. "There being two-thousand and two of the prolific Monkeys. I'm afraid your use of the word 'small' was inexact."

Drat! cursed Gayelette under her breath; so I did miss some of them. Aloud she tried to brazen it out. "That was simply an act of revenge. The monkeys and I have been feuding cordially for half a century. They caused me to be turned into a frog for forty-three years. Now it's my turn."

"Oh, dear," gasped both the more conventional Ozites and stared at Gayelette reproachfully.

What else could they say? Mentioning the ineffectualness and self-defeatingness of vendettas to one who was not already vividly aware of those factors since the word Go was a waste of breath. Glinda decided to be equally matter-of-fact.

"I'll accompany you as you go to undo your spell," proposed the witch. "It will be most interesting to observe

your method and procedures... Actually, I think we ought to get started right away. There's never a time like the present!" She sipped her cocktail with relish.

Gayelette had already finished hers. She felt a need of the kicker. She meant to carry on as jauntily as before but she happened to notice the steeling glint in the usually so mild eyes of both the other ladies.

"Just as your grace requires," she murmured low, and tried to regain what ground she could by playing it as ladylike herself.

There was a painful pause—broken, fortunately, by a disturbance in the corridor. "You can't!" the voice of the Minute Maid was heard protesting. "I've told you: Her Grace is in conference!"

Her voice suddenly echoed louder as the door burst open and an irate man stormed into the room. "Your most elevated Highnesses!" he cried, "and madam—" Here he nodded to Gayelette, whom he did not know. "I do beseech your graces both to pardon me but I would have some conference with your noble selves in matter of great good and touching the very safety of the realm."

Perhaps it was quoting Shakespeare (approximately) that did it but Ozma and Glinda got the feeling that Orangespiegel's business was of such urgency that it justified his striding roughshod over every rule of etiquette.

"Come in, Master Till, do," said Glinda affably and pointed to a fourth chair. She glanced at queen Ozma and the two exchanged a wink. For some reason (*I don't know why*) they both favored the irritating mischief-maker and usually ended putting up with his worst embroilments. It looked like they were going to be doing the same now.

"What problem is troubling you today?" they asked, and Glinda nudged the cocktail tray across the coffee table.

"Not me only, royal ladies!" cried the Owl Practitioner, trying to make his self-serving look like strivings for the

public weal. "I believe I can state that it's a case of *lèse-majesté* directed against our beloved lady, Princess Ozma here. The Unnikegs have held a referendum again and voted overwhelmingly to become a kingdom — with Ex-Prince Quelala as King!" (You can imagine the feelings of Gayelette at that news.) "I'm left right out in the cold! There wasn't a thing enunciated about my position as Your Majesty's duly appointed Governor. I wasn't even spoken of as a candidate for the new ruler's prime minister — not that I would dream of taking any such under-ordered position. That job is going to be offered to the notorious Frogman" (you can imagine the feelings of Gayelette at that news) "who is supposed to have brought off some diplomatic triumph or other a few years back. Why, the fellow hasn't been seen in the country for years and they don't even know where he is."

"That's a budget of news, to be sure," commented Glinda. "What is it you would have us do?"

"As I live I'll win my ancient rights again!" cried Till, still more or less quoting Shakespeare. "Will your grace not assist me with your magic powers?" this to Glinda; and to Ozma, "and you, my Lady, by the force of law?"

This threw rather a wrench in the works. Neither of the women was inclined to rake Till's chestnuts from the fire just like that but certainly they would be interested in seeing what the goings-on in Unnikegwick amounted to. However, they couldn't be everywhere at once.

The little fairy ruler saw a way out of the dilemma. "I," she announced, "shall go with the governor to Thobdibnub —"

"Wulfenite City, your grace," said Till with a grievance. "They've stolen the name of my capital as well."

"Oh, dear..." Ozma registered concern: "—while the Good Sorceress, I believe, intends to journey further afield: to a certain Gillikin forest, is it not so?"

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

All was joy at Thobdibnub Elsqualspil, now celebrating its last official moments under that name. At midnight the change would be in force, and at noon next day His Majesty King Quelala the First of Unnikegwick would be crowned in the Wulfenite City.

Quelala was amiably indifferent. The people *would* have it so. Country cousins joined with their metropolitan kin in the bustling booming little city to acclaim the reluctant ruler—with his so typically (though foreign) Unnikeg coloring. He had already for some time been referred to as the Orange Prince of Oz, and now he was to be the Orange King.

The only fly in the ointment was the pesky Till Orangespiegel. So okay, it was his machinations that had turned the country orange in the first place; but now he'd done his work. Why couldn't he go decently away and leave the Orangemen to the pleasure of being orange? Nobody wanted him. Till had forgotten the primary rule of power politics: If you want to have *real* power, based on the solid support of a devoted citizenry (rather than on fear), you've got to be likable. And nobody liked the egotistical fantast, Till Orangespiegel.

Well, two people did (as I say, don't ask me why), and they were ones worth having the backing of. That was the two powerful dames, Ozma and Glinda.

It was eleven o'clock on the morning of the royal day. Bands were playing, crowds were cheering, balloons were dispensed, gum was chewed, popcorn was popped, and hot dogs were spread with mustard, ketchup, relish, chili, sauerkraut, and anything else one wanted on them. The people-lined streets were ready for the parade.

As usual, there was a little bollix-up at the start. Queen-to-be Dayna got her trailing veil caught on a guardsman's halberd when it came up in salute and there was a little tussle while they got it free without tearing the veil or spoil-

ing the halberd. Some people said it was an unfavorable omen.

The nascently royal couple ascended into the pumpkin coach (what else in an orange country?) and the procession slowly moved away from Mon Désir in the direction of the town hall.

The mob was unruly. There were no police, of course, to control the eager spectators and they would keep surging forward to get a better look. Then when the press had halted the carriage, little girls in pinafores would be shoved forward to reach bouquets up to the coach windows. By the time the popular pair reached the town hall they opened a florist's shop.

But that was not yet. For suddenly a low rolling murmur was heard beginning at the opposite end of the street of the line of march. Someone had been recognized! And now there was heard above the din the sharp tattoo of wooden hoofs, mingled with cries of "It's Ozma!" , "It's the Princess!!"

The royal red wagon clattered up, the way was cleared, and the vehicle with its wooden locomotion came to rest facing the coronation coach. Ozma twirled the reins lightly round the whip-stock and sprang as lightly to the ground, followed by the Owl Practitioner.

"What a celebration!" exclaimed the girl ruler and then as she drew near the coach, whose occupants were leaning out, agog, she asked merrily, "What seems to be going on here?"

Madam Dayna gripped her husband's knee for silence and took the word: "Oh, Your Majesty! How wonderful that you could be here. We were late in sending out the invitations. I wasn't sure yours had arrived—"

"It didn't," confirmed the young queen. "Governor Orangespiegel here brought the word." Dayna nodded curtly. "I thought we ought to be present in person on such

an auspicious occasion. But—er, are you sure it's quite legal?"

"Oh, yes, your majesty," said Dayna with assurance, then rummaged in the glove compartment. "See? Here's our patent: signed by 59,525 loyal citizens of Unnikegwick. (Only eighteen voted against.)"

Ozma received the scroll—it was quite heavy and Till had to help and glanced partway down the list of names. "It all seems to be in order," admitted the queen of Oz. "Well, Till, what do you think? This is democracy in action."

Orangespiegel had most urge to say "To heck with democracy" but of course didn't dare. He just looked discomfited—and suddenly just unhappy. Nobody wanted him. He thought he'd go eat worms.

"Not even Prime Minister?" he asked in a still voice.

"No," said Dayna so there was no mistake. "The dear Frogman of Oz is to be offered that post as soon as he can be found. Er, your majesty, do you happen to know where...?"

"I'm awfully sorry; I don't," confessed the queen. (It was Glinda who knew everything, but she was far away in Gillikinland by now.)

"Never mind," said Dayna with a smile. "Won't your majesty join us in the coach?"

"Oh, thank you, we'll follow along in the wagon, if we may," demurred Ozma, who was much too considerate to abandon the Owl Practitioner, who had *not* been invited into the coach. "I'm looking forward enormously to witnessing your coronation."

It was left at that, and the parade moved on, weighty with pomp and circumstance, to the portico of the Town Hall, where the principals descended and entered the building. Using the model of Washington's inauguration, the crowning took place on the open balustraded set-back

above the entrance, where all the world might see.

Gold they had in plenty at the Wulfenite City so the new-minted royal crown was of solid red gold and weighty it was, though "I weigh it lightly, were it heavier," quoted Quelala, determined not to view his new office with ponderousness.

They lacked archbishops and popes in Oz, so the new-installed mayor of the Wulfenite City did the honors of lifting and placing the crown upon the royal brow. How Till Orangespiegel fumed when he saw that fellow on the balcony! Then it was the turn of Mistress Dayna to become, at a stroke, a queen. For her there was a more delicate diadem of orange (peculiar to Unnikegwick!) silver and this King Quelala took with both hands from the tray of beaten copper engraved with the arms of the Unnikegs and lifted it high.

"With this crown I thee endow with the title of queen of the Unnikegs," he intoned, "and all the rights and privileges thereunto pertaining." His hands descended and the inclusive verge of golden metal settled round her brow.

Then tenderly the new-made king took his bride of twenty-six summers in his arms and kissed her lips.

At once the king was gone and in his place on the tessellated floor was a bright orange frog about three inches long.

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

The whale looked round him wildly. "Oh, I've never been as high as this in my life," he cried. And he hadn't been drinking. He teetered in sudden emotion and nearly rolled off his trolley. "I'm feeling quite light-headed. It must be the altitude."

"No, you're light-bodied as well," corrected Lucky Buck. "Don't you remember we took all the stores out of you? All except the cases of Fritz's explosives." Then he gave up uttering and again threw his shoulder to the task of pushing with a new effort.

They were about half-way up the long crest and everybody was fed up. They'd been at it for days and it still looked like they'd never reach the top. By now there was no one left who continued wholeheartedly to support the carrying out of the whale's ego trip. It was only stubborn determination not to abandon a project once begun that drove them on.

The guck had gone off to round up the rest of his kin on the island. A single Guck supplying as he did almost the whole market, there was no need for them to be a numerous clan. Soon after Davy's little interlude the climbers spotted behind them, puffing up the trail, a mob of small creatures in a rainbow of pale hues. Fritz d'Arc counted two-hundred and ten of the individuals.

"I thought you said you had just six cousins living in out-of-the-way corners of the island," said Fritz by way of greeting as the lead Guck got nearer. This was the pale green one who had been the frogman's original friend and whom they called "Gucks" (although in fact *all* gucks are called "Gucks").

"I did," said Gucks, talking the way we know he/it talked. "I do. Here they are."

"But there are two hundred and ten individuals here, by actual count," protested d'Arc.

"Oh, no, they just multibifurcated—for ease of travel,

you know. Check!; you'll see there are just six colors. All of one color are really parts of one organism — if we can speak of organisms in our case."

Right. There was gray and old rose and a sort of bluish lavender and beige and yellow and an apricot shade of puce. "Any individuals of the same shade can coalesce at will," explained Gucks.

"What would happen if two individuals of different colors tried to 'coalesce'?" asked the young frogman interestedly.

"Oh, there'd be the most terrible explosion!" explained the guck. "Whole mountainsides would be carried away and vast blocks of earth drop into the sea."

Everybody gasped. "What did you say?" said Fritz, stunned. "Color-mismatched gucks interact as high explosives?"

"Why, yes... the highest. Until the development of the H-Bomb, it was the highest explosive agent ever observed by science."

Fritz d'Arc felt seriously inclined to multibifurcate his friend with heavy and repeated blows about the head and body. Just think! If only he'd happened to mention that characteristic of his tribe a little earlier, all the alarums and excursions of the last several weeks might have been avoided.

But maybe there was something he didn't know about such explosivity. "Er, *do* mismatched gucks ever coalesce? — accidentally, of course."

"Sir!" spoke Gucks severely, drawing himself up to his full four feet, four inches. "Have a care how you speak. Such behavior would be the height of bad form. That's excess, the most shocking sin known to gucks!"

"Oh, I didn't realize."

The augmented procession moved on up the long trail. Overnighting became more and more of a problem as they

climbed above the ice-cream line. All those who could crowded into the whale. By vast jaw-stretching on the part of Davy and fancy gymnastics by the elephant and the giraffe the latter could *just* manage to get inside; even so, they had to lie on their sides and half-crawl, half be pushed by the combined efforts of all the others. It was *very* uncomfortable but just marginally better than freezing. As it was, dozens of the gucks had to stay outside, where they froze. However, they thawed again in the morning.

Naturally tempers were frayed to bursting by the time they neared the ultimate summit. The way got progressively and rapidly narrower and there was a good deal of jostling, even though they tailed out in an ever longer thinner queue. Finally late one morning they reached what seemed to be the ultimate platform before the actual crater rim at the peak. They were approaching the pit of the Abominable No-Man from a different direction than Fritz had climbed before and the view from this side was even more breath-taking than he had experienced earlier.

The wooden whale stood still to thrill. An additional supply of ball bearings ran down his face, he was so moved, and the others were quick to catch them before they went rolling and bouncing away down the vertiginous slope. Below them the heavy layer of frozen custard gave way some hundreds of feet farther down to outliers of powdered sugar. Below that were just the glistening dark brown yet half-crystalline slopes of rock candy, and far away the greeny blue salt sea. Nothing moved except a flock of sea birds in the middle distance making for the mainland.

They must have stood there twenty minutes, gazing. Then Davy heaved a deep sigh and said, "Onward, men."

"'Onward'?" echoed his friend Buck, amazed. "This is *it*, old man. You've had your whale's eye view from a mountain-top. You can't go any further!"

"But I haven't seen the No-Man!" cried Davy in alarm,

puckering up again. The crest of the crater lay still some twenty yards steeply upward.

"I'm afraid you're not going to," put in Fritz d'Arc. "It's impossible. Buck and I are going to run up and scatter the charges and get right back, then we make tracks away from here."

"I wanna see the No-Man! I wanna see the No-Man!" clamored the whale and heaved up and down in his agitation, and also precariously from side to side.

The others all fumed and swore (if such a thing had been possible among Ozites). They were getting more ball bearings than they could handle now. In the end they agreed to make one final effort and *try* to tugboat the whale into a half-upright position angled against the steep slope so he could just get his eye over the crater rim for a decko.

It was a rash and foolhardy undertaking, almost doomed to failure from the start. Everybody had to take part, even including the three-hundred and thirty-one gucklings, whose muscles were jelly and virtually of no use. Still, all working together, the crowd managed to get the whale's eye within three feet of a slightly broken-down bit of the crater rim.

Then ultimate disaster struck. Davy, who had been moved off his track for this final maneuver, could see the alluring goal just feet away from him, but the combined efforts of man, animal, and guck could avail nothing further. Clustered thickly about him, the entire party pleaded, all talking at once, for Davy to give up the whole doomed operation.

Not that a single individual of them took note of it but exactly at this moment an additional moving something appeared in the southern sky, flying rapidly nearer. It was a tragedy of *just* missed timing. A moment more and then—. But there was no moment.

Davy the whale, after an outburst of passionate frus-

trated sobs, gave a vast lurch and attempted to heave himself upward the last few feet. In so doing he had the bad fortune to shove over the rim of the crater more than a dozen of the variegated gucklings as well as the Great Goose of Oz. The Goose could fly but as for the gucks ...?

They fell splattingly the few dozen feet onto the surface of the NoMan but also onto each other, inadvertently coalescing. A series of vast detonations took place. The air was filled with flying blood. The whole side of the crater rim was blown away. A huge rent in the mountain wall was created. Everything began to fall.

An in the sky: Was it a bird? Was it a plane? Not, it was superwoman: *Glinda* the Good Sorceress, arriving in her swan chariot!

Just an instant too late.

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

Princess Gayelette sat slumped in a corner of that same swan chariot as it flew high over green fields and forests.

"Is your grace seriously out of sorts?" inquired Witch Glinda sincerely. She never felt really at her ease, having to ride herd on people.

"I am. I shan't conceal it," answered Gayelette vigorously enough, though still striving to be polite. "I feel considerably frustrated. My revenge gambit is the *only* thing that has prospered for me since my disenchantment. I who once had everything now have nothing. May I not with right feel out of sorts?"

"Perhaps something can be done for you."

"What? please. I've lost my principality—and if I tried to get it back I would gain only unpopularity. I've lost my beloved husband, and if I tried to get him back I should break up what by all reports is a happy home. My looks too have not been improved by forty-three years as a frog. And if I try to use my magic arts I am taken to task. *What* can be done for me? I wonder." The princess spoke bitterly.

"Have you perhaps thought of friendship... simply fond affections?"

"That's not a full-time career," dismissed Gayelette shortly. But then she mused. "Actually, I had a friend once—even if he was only a great gross frog... I wonder..."

"Yes, my dear?"

"No, it's just impossible. Even if one could imagine anything as sickening as being devoted to a frog, he couldn't care for me, in human form... And yet... strange, but even now I can recall how passionately I was attracted. And he to me... Most curious... a lost paradise..."

A silence fell, broken only when the Minute Maid, from the back seat where she watched over Glinda's magic tool kit, leaned forward to indicate discreetly the landscape below which had subtly altered from green to purple.

"Yes," said Glinda. "We'll be there in another half hour, I should say."

"There" was the great forest on the border of Tresgaie once ruled over by the King of the Winged Monkeys and infested with hordes of the creatures. Now the travelers saw on their approach how strangely stony that forest had become. The trees looked to be having a struggle to keep alive amidst the boulders heaped among them.

"That must be soon set to rights," murmured Glinda. Soon it also was. The swan chariot came down lightly in a rock-strewn glade where Princess Gayelette as a hummingbird had once spent an enjoyable couple of hours. She now performed as rapidly as possible the petrification ritual in smooth reverse.

Soon the air was made hideous by the screeching and chattering of the revived monkeys as they rose upward in a body and flapped to perches on the branches. Glinda had to keep a sharp eye out to spot the monkey king but soon she saw him: wearing his drum major's cap, which appeared quite sodden from a month in all weathers on the forest floor.

"Oh, King Cheecheecheepip!" she called out with a yoo-hoo, "over here, please. We must have conference with you."

The king approached and bent the knee. "Lady Glinda!" he cried; "I and all my tribe are ever in your debt for freeing us from bondage to this frightful woman!" Here he stared at Gayelette reproachfully. "Now I sense that we have to be grateful to you all over again, for yet another, similar service." He turned his gaze again at the red sorceress wonderingly.

"Yes," admitted Glinda. "Now I want a stop put to this nonsense. You neither of you are bad individuals. You yourself, so young Dorothy related to me long ago, described the princess as both beautiful and good. She is

so today—in her heart. Therefore shake hands—I command it!—and swear that you will never more remember your former hatred, so thrive thou and thine.”

The monkey king, who had no choice—and every reason to wish to please the good witch—did as he was bid and put out his paw.

“Madam,” said Glinda to Gayelette, “your self is not exempt from this. Love Lord Cheecheecheepip; let him kiss your hand; and what you do, do it unfeignedly.”

Much as the princess found the simian icky she too followed orders. Forty-three years as the monkey king’s victim had taught her that discretion might after all pay better. If she were to attempt to carry on the feud she would draw the anger of not only the apes but of Glinda the sorceress, whom she had no desire to antagonize.

“Now then,” said Glinda with satisfaction, “we close that chapter forever... Er, your royal highness,” she said to the king, “if I can be of immediate service in any way...? You do realize that you and your tribe have been turned to stone for more than a month...?”

“Great Scot!” shrilled the ape. “That’s horrible! We must away instantly on our rounds!” Their king’s agitation communicated itself to the other monkeys on branches round about and they all began to chatter and gibber at once.

“Your ‘rounds’?” said Glinda wonderingly.

“Yes. We’re not just idle playboys, you know. We have a vital function to perform, laid on us by the Witch of the East while we were briefly in thrall to her. It was the only service she required of us when she owned that wretched Golden Cap but then it was to be a service in perpetuity.”

“What was that service?”

“Was—and *is!* We have to scour Oz continually, clearing away any dismembered—but still live—bits of living creatures that have come to grief. It’s a very important office nowadays.”

"I have learned that!" said Glinda, her mind suddenly racing and any number of things falling into place. "What do you do with them?"

"Gingemma instructed us to find a desert island some place far off and dump them there. I guess the good—er, wicked witch hadn't traveled all that much and didn't know there *weren't* any deserted islands within shooting distance of Oz. They all have *some*—often weird—kind of life on them. The best we could do was a *dessert* island, where at least we've virtually never seen anything moving and where there was a mountain crater that seemed fairly ideal for the purpose."

"I know the place," confirmed Glinda. "The Prince of Wates once had a season there¹¹. But he never referred to any such refuse pit as you describe."

"Wasn't he a vast fat man?" asked Cheecheecheepip. "My people reported catching sight of such a one for a time. But then he disappeared."

"That's right."

"He could never have made it up the rock candy mountain to see our disposal sight," dismissed the monkey king. "But now, my dears, I really must be off!"

"One moment, your majesty!" required Glinda. "I need to know more, *much* more! Why did my sister witch lay that charge on your tribe? What were those poor accident victims to her?"

"Search me!—er, I beg your pardon. Gingemma never gave us any explanation; just said 'Do it'."

"How awfully curious," mused the red witch. "I must look into that connection carefully¹²."

"Now may I be off, your grace?" urged the king. "Again: with the most respectful and heartfelt thanks of all my people."

¹¹ See *UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ*. Editor's note.

¹² But it took her a while. See *AUNT EM AND UNCLE HENRY IN OZ*. Editor's note.

“Yes, off you go. But I shall probably be wanting to consult with you again very shortly. This disposal pit doesn’t sound very like a good arrangement to me. There’ll have to be changes made.”

With a great rustling of wings the King of the Winged Monkeys, and after him all of his band, near two thousand strong, rose up through the trees and rapidly flew away to the four points of the compass.

“That dessert island,” muttered the sorceress, not obviously addressing Princess Gayelette; “I ought to go see just what that entails.” Then, “Madame, will you go to give your censure in this business?”

Gayelette hardly knew what Shakespeare was talking about, but she agreed readily.

C H A P T E R T H I R T Y - T H R E E

“Kwer-lukh-lukh,” said Quelala. Then he seemed to collect himself and piped, “Oh gosh, oh gosh, what happened to me?”

Queen Dayna had fainted. As the mayor and Ozma held her up the latter replied, admirably unflapped, “I’m afraid there’s magic at work. Your majesty has taken on the guise of a frog.”

“It’s not a guise. I really am a frog.”

Ozma got the queen’s father to support his drooping daughter and bent down to hear the king frog better. She didn’t really like to actually pick him up. “It all comes back to me now,” pursued Quelala. “It was more than half a century ago—”

But all impromptu, there on the town hall balustrade, with the crowd looking on and growing restive and murmurous at the unexplained disappearance of their new king, was no way or place to relate a many-faceted story that went back to the very roots of recent Oz history. Princess Ozma took over and stepped to the balcony rail.

“Citizens of Oz—and Unnikegwick! A sad accident has occurred but it is hoped it may soon be put right. For the time being the act of coronation is suspended. Please disperse to your homes. You will be kept informed by way of the town crier.”

While she was there the young queen of Oz signaled for Till Orangespiegel (standing among hoi polloi) to join the group of personages inside the hall. Then someone less queasy (his father-in-law) gathered up the damp and naked king and carried him to a table top in an inner room.

There, while a lady in waiting waved smelling salts under Queen Dayna’s nose, the frog told his story.

“I was born at the edge of a mire at the edge of the Quadling Country. I am orange by nature and my hair—though that came later—which looked so odd in the land of the Gillikins proved to be in its proper place here. I was

a young frogling, just out of tadpolehood, when my bright coloring happened to attract the attention of a visiting witch who was gathering charms and simples there at the red-yellow Quadling-Winkie border.

“‘Hah!’ I remember her exclaiming. ‘Leg of frog, eye of newt! Might do very well in the hexing stock pot,’ and so saying she grabbed me and stuck me in her gunny sack.

“I got a good deal jounced and tumbled before I saw daylight again which was an inn room in a land where everything was strangely purple. The witch was at a table, turning over some papers and piles of what looked like junk, including some small living creatures, including myself.

“She had a habit of talking to herself, so in one way and another I gathered quite a lot about what she was up to. It seemed she’d been on a foraging expedition throughout Oz—a kind of journey she was in the habit of making—and she’d just brought off a splendid coup in the way of some transformation charms.

“I cowered under some hemp agrimony leaves, trying to avoid notice, and watched as she waved a crooked stick and made passes, mumbled incantations and sprinkled a lavender-gray powder—and succeeded in turning her watch into a ham sandwich—and back again.

“Then she set herself to some more broadly encompassing spells. She turned the bed into a coach and four but they proved entirely too big and rambunctious for the room so she had quickly to make them resume their previous form. Next the turn came to living things. She took a little pink rabbit that had been so incautious as to continue to hop about on the table and turned her with hokus-pokus into a servant maiden complete with apron and cap.

“‘Very good, my girl,’ quoth the witch. ‘Now run downstairs and tell them you’re the new hired girl and bring me breakfast on a tray.’

"The witch had really got into the spirit of the thing and now stirred amongst her heaps of trash energetically, looking for something to enchant. Of course, it was not long before I was discovered. 'Aha!' cried she, 'thought you'd avoid me—ey?—and save yourself for the stock pot at home, along with the newts' eyes? No such luck! I'm going to turn you into a—what?' She paused and then a fit of monstrous giggling seized her. 'What better?' she cried. 'Of course! I'll turn you into a prince! And—oh, hee, hee, hee!—I'll fix it so the enchantment can only be broken by a kiss—of what?... Oh, I know: The kiss of a—of a new-crowned queen. Oh, but rats! If I make you an obvious prince you'll probably get kissed by a young queen in no time, and then all the fun will be over. No. I'll just give you a very noble bearing and an aristocratic appearance and park you near a king's palace and see if you get recognized for a prince.'

"So that's what she did," ended Quelala. "The rest you know."

"One thing not, your majesty," demurred Princess Ozma. "Who was the witch? What was her name?"

"Mombi."

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

“Oh, by all the fairies in Fäerie!” shrieked Sorceress Glinda, aghast and her oath was not a bit too strong. “This is the most terrible thing I’ve ever been witness to!” she stared ‘round her, horror-struck, as hunks of frozen ice cream and flesh and blood flew helter-skelter.

But the wise woman had her wits about her and used the charm that was kept always in readiness at the tip of her tongue. She threw a hasty but efficient time-freeze on the scene, which gave her an opportunity to investigate and make careful consideration before deciding finally how to cope with the problem.

While Gayelette and the Minute Maid from their seats in the chariot looked on, dumb with horror, Glinda skillfully maneuvered the craft ‘round among the various phenomena hanging motionless in midair. She kept up a running commentary as they went.

“It was an explosion! but I can’t quite make out of what... Yes, I see: That sort of ‘lake’ of flesh in the pit will be what the monkey king was talking about. As bits of live maimed flesh are dropped here they grow together as part of the vast awful organism. How perfectly dreadful. But the thing’s been most fearfully hurt by the explosion. There’s a great hole that will soon fill up with blood. What are those curious-looking things near it? Like big blobs of jelly. Detached bits of the organism, I suppose. Odd colors though... Oh, oh! I see!: Vast cracks in the walls of the crater rim. That’s going to all go crashing down the mountain side as soon as I let go the charm. I’d better see what’s up beyond, on the other side. And whatever happened to that strange procession we glimpsed as we flew in? If I didn’t know better I’d have said the largest component was that wooden whale, Davy Jones, but of course that’s not possible. Now, come, Gloria, Euphoria, Castoria, Menoria! and you in the lead: Phantasmagoria and Victoria!: fly your durndest. You’ve got to lift this chariot a good fifty feet—

sharp now!... Whew! We just made it over the rim...

Oh, my God!"

Yes, the enchantress used that expression so rare in Oz. But she had received perhaps the most violent shock of her many centuries of life to date.

"Oh... oh... this is the most terrible thing that's ever happened!" she repeated. "Oh, the poor things! Oz will *never* get over their loss! You see? It *was* Davy the Whale. And that's the *Elegant Elephant!* and such a lot of other creatures. And two young men! And all of them doomed! The shock waves haven't reached them yet but the ground they're standing on is all going to fall down the mountain side into the sea. They've no possible way of escaping! I can't shift them out of here! In this airborne chariot I've no leverage at all! *Oh, mother Lurliné! What am I to do?!*"

By now the sorceress was frankly weeping in floods and her two passengers still sat silently aghast—until suddenly, as the chariot maneuvered about the scene, Gayelette split the air with a piercing scream: "*That's Fred!! That's my Frogman, Fred Fruakx!! He's not going to perish!!*" and quick as thought the princess, who was no slouch as a sorceress, cast a spell and turned the great green-yellow frog into a king-sized yellow-green parrot—which remained, admittedly, motionless but would fly when time thawed.

Glinda saw what she was doing and stopped her useless bawling and got busy. Time-freezes don't last forever and this one had already been going on for four minutes. She needed one transformation that would do for all. She pronounced her incantation so fast ear could not follow,

but the gist of it was: “Let them all sprout wings — and have the wit to use them!”

It was done. And not an instant too soon. With one great cosmic *crack!* time started again, the blood and ice cream flew onward, the mountain-side slowly slid away and fell a thousand feet in slow motion to the sea, and the Abominable No-Man, now become a glacier of flesh, flowed slowly after.



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

“But oh! Your Majesty!” cried Queen Dayna, struggling to her feet, “make him a man again!” And she dropped to her knees in pleading wise.

“Oh, please, my dear,” said Ozma, who never liked for people to grovel, “do get to your feet.”

Eventually Dayna, finding kneeling did no good, did so. But she continued to request.

Ozma, however, would not—nor could she—rush into anything. “Let us see what King Quelala has to say,” she ordained.

“My name is not Quelala, for a start,” said the monarch thus called upon. “As a frog my name was Birrdiepe. Still, one name is as good as another. But now you all see, of course, the secret of my life as a man. I *wasn't* a man. I was a transformed frog, with all a frog's motivations, though all memory of my ranidian past was lost. My motives were not human ones. Now I think I see why I, so seemingly strangely, was never fond of Princess Gayelette but preferred the river—or a convenient pool.”

“What about me?!” burst in his poor queen. “You loved me, didn't you?”

“I think I did—er, do,” Quelala corrected himself hastily. “It was your coloring! When I saw your lovely orange hair as you came from the tap room at the Ball and Chain I knew I had come home.”

“You *had* come home, of course,” confirmed Dayna and fell to weeping quietly and disconsolately.

“But I was never... engaged in human life. Now that I'm a frog again all my former existence, and its motivations, come back—and all seem so natural.”

“So you would wish to keep your nature-given form?” asked Ozma, perhaps jumping the gun a little.

“Oh, I didn't say that, your grace,” returned Quelala. “Though it feels lovely to be able to hop again,” and here he did a little one, just to remember, “I have no life

as a frog. All my relations, if not dead, will surely have forgotten me in half a century. As a human I had responsibilities—and people who cared. In the end those may prove to be the greatest motive force. But what I'd really like..."

"Yes?" said both the royal ladies and hung on his words.

"What I'd really like is to see again my friend, the Frogman. He, of all—well, can I say 'people?'—could most nearly know how I feel now and advise me."

Queen Ozma forbore to bring the news that Quelala's estranged wife, Princess Gayelette, would know even better. "Dear me," said she instead, "the Frogman. We spoke of him only yesterday, at Glinda's." She glanced at Till Orangespiegel for confirmation. "He's somewhere in the north country, writing his memoirs."

"Your Grace," said Quelala, almost for the first time in his life really urgent about something, "do you think I might be allowed to go seek him? Right now I feel that is what I should like most of all."

"Well," Ozma reflected quickly. "Protocol—as well as procedure require that there be some delay in this matter in any case." She spoke for the information of the company in general. "In all the history of *fäerie*, I've never heard of turning anyone, after his disenchantment, back into what a wicked witch had made him over as. I'm afraid that would be considered very bad form, if not outright sinful. I would not wish to take upon myself, unadvised, any such responsibility.

"Furthermore, I couldn't. Such arts are witchcraft, not fairy magic. Even as a fairy, my practice of magic has been most modest: a few wish fulfillments, the odd turning of small inanimate objects into more useful forms. I could not re-enchant you, your majesty, if I would."

There went something like a deep sigh 'round the muniment room to which they had adjourned: a sigh of

disappointment? or relief? of awe at the revelation of the fairy's limitations?

"But something I *can* do," appended Ozma, with a sort of grave twinkle in her eye. "I can go with you on your journey to seek the Frogman. I wish to confer with Sorceress Glinda on the protocol of your case and she too is in the North.

"One more thing: I was once Tip, the servant dependent of the enchantress Mombi and I happen to know where she hid her most potent charms. I do not believe they have ever been recovered."

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

If Davy Jones thought it was a triumph to be the first whale to mountain-climb, what of his thoughts as he rode a thermal on wooden wings that were an eighth of a mile from tip to tip?

“Oh, I shall never live in the sea again!” he sang (to the tune of “Old Hundredth”). “This is too fine!”

“It is *rahr*ther nice, isn’t it?” agreed the Nude Gnu, hovering a thousand feet above the beach, or what was left of it after the mountains(1)ide had passed and before the slow-coach flesh glacier had arrived.

Some of those rescued had gathered, however, on a bleak shelf of rock and were discussing the most urgent problems of ways and means. The purple elephant took charge of the social introductions.

“Your Grace!” he trumpeted and got down on his front knees before Glinda the Good. “How are we ever to thank you?!”

“Please, don’t,” dismissed the witch. “Present me, rather, to your friends—as I, in turn, wish to present mine. This is the Dowager Princess Gayelette of Tresgaie. And this—” here she laid an arm about the shoulders of the pretty auburn-haired Minute Maid, “is my dear faithful Pucella Augenblix.”

Young Buck didn’t wait to be introduced but stuck out his hand. “Hello, Pucella!” he cried in jaunty American fashion. “Now I know I’m right to be called ‘lucky’! I met *you*!” The Minute Maid blushed agreeably.

“Yes, well, actually Your Grace already knows that young man,” huffed the elephant. “That’s Lucky Bucky Jones. Would you believe it? The way he’s grown.”

Glinda expressed her pleasure in re-meeting the youth but then turned to look inquiringly—and, be it noted, admiringly—at the dark older man. “And this?”

“Well, er—that’s DesPlessis d’ Arc, American frogman... at your service! I rather think.”

"Hi, queen!" said Fritz dArc, but gravely and with emphasis.

Glinda frowned. "Oh!" she blurted faintly. Then, "Forgive me—but someone else used to call me that. It gave me a start... I'm no queen."

Fritz said nothing. Just looked at her. And Glinda, like her servant maiden, began to blush.

"Hr-rauchk!" squawked the Frogparrot of Oz, who seemed in danger of being left out of old-home week. "I'd like to report continued successful convalescence, Madam Glinda. You've been a most accomplished medica maga!" At the same time he was glad to escape specific notice by Princess Gayelette, whom he now saw for the first time clothed and in her right mind.

Glinda wasn't having that, however. "I have to make it clear," she stated with a grave-gay intonation, "that your timely allafication was the direct result of a remark I overheard from the Princess Gayelette. It ran something like this: 'My Frogman isn't going to perish! Not if I can help it!' and she promptly turned you into a parrot—which gave me the idea for providing wings all around."

When the Frogman heard that he was struck all of a heap and, like another frogman, just stared and stared.

To cover her own awkwardness Gayelette said, "I expect you'll want to resume your true form immediately...?"

Fred Fruakx coughed, all confess, and said, "Uhh, well... no! not exactly. It was a thrill, flying. I'd like to try it a bit longer." He went on looking.

Gayelette retired, and now *she* was blushing.

The Elegant Elephant seemed to be about the only one who hadn't found a girl friend. But wasn't it about time? "I have sent for these strawberries," he said loudly, *à propos de bottes* but faithfully quoting Shakespeare.

Everybody gaped, their attention caught, and he went on: "What is our next move? It'll be dark in an hour. At the