
C H A P T E R N I N E

"We're so sorry to wake you, Oz."

"Not at all, dear lady! Come in, do."

The Wizard knotted the black velvet cord about his dressing gown, not noticing that he bound the knot with his left hand. The others did.

Hesitantly Ozma drew attention to the phenomenon.

The Wizard was bemused. "It's like that all over!" supplied Betsy Bobbin. "Everything's backwards!

"Yes," said Dorothy Gale, "and now the question is; what to do about it?"

The Wizard was inclined to view the matter not too gravely. "I wonder if we *can* do anything about it..? in the middle of the night. Might it not be best to sleep on the problem? Perhaps in the morning we could see it more clearly."

"Oh, I couldn't *face* the dawn," exclaimed Betsy dramatically, "not knowing."

"Right you are then," acquiesced Oz Diggs. "Now come over here, if you please, all of you—" He began to shove furniture around and in a few moments had a semi-circle of comfortable chairs arranged before a big picture window. "This window at least *used* to look out on the east. We'll know when the sun comes up whether the phenomenon is general—or restricted just to

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the palace, or some part of it.”

The party digested this statement for some moments in silence. Then, “*How* will we know, Wizard?” ventured Dorothy. “If we see the sun come up out this east window, how can we tell if we’ve just been imagining things and window and sun are both still in the east?—or if *both* have switched round to the opposite direction?”

“Well done, little Dorothy “ the Wizard laughed. “The best answer I’ve had yet. Frankly, I don’t know. Let’s wait and see.”

So they all sank into overstuffed chairs with grateful sighs - and in a few minutes were sound asleep; all those who *could* sleep. This was what the wise Wizard had had in mind. He chatted for a few minutes longer with Queen Ozma, who was actually the tiredest of all after her exertions at map-making, then allowed the little fairy too to subside into gentle slumber.

Meanwhile Oz (who had already taken the edge off his own sleep need) got busy with his astronomy apparatus. He climbed the steps to the catwalk under the revolvable dome of his observatory, took his seat at the eye end of his great telescope and began slowly to move the focus of the instrument across the starry sky. If east was west and west was east (apparently the two *could* meet; he noted in passing that the moon looked blue, so perhaps it *was* the season for the unusual), surely some sign of it would be discernible in the heavens.

Well, that was reassuring. The map of the constellations appeared reversed—which meant that they at least had remained unchanged! As the Wizard came more and more under the influence of the switch, reversed things began to look more normal, while, conversely, phenomena which maintained their traditional orientation appeared as a mirror image.

Suddenly he braked the slowly panning device. “You two!” he whispered loudly to the Scarecrow and Scraps, who, sleepless, were pacing about, conversing quietly, in the room below. “Just step up here! will you, please.”

The two beings tottered obediently up the ladder. The Wizard wanted confirmation for something highly unlikely he

had just seen: a tiny black object beginning a slow fluttering eccentric trajectory across the broad blue disc of the moon.

“Will you take a look in there?”

Lady first—and the Patchwork Girl applied her eye to the view-hole. In a moment a soft cotton whistle escaped her lips

“Twinkle, twinkle, little bat,” she quoted.

“How I wonder what you’re at!

Up above the worla you fly

Like a tea-tray in the sky .”

“A good comparison,” acknowledged the Wizard. “It’s a mere speck but the thing does look rectangular, oblong—well, like the outline map of Oz itself. And do you notice?; it seems to be turning over and over—or round and round—and giving off blue flashes? I think one side of it’s reflecting the light of the moon.”

Next the Scarecrow had a look but just at that moment the projectile completed its passage across the moon face and he was disappointed. In the black depths of space only the still-continuing occasional faint blue flashes could be seen.

Even so the learned straw man received an inkling of further data. “Correct me if I’m wrong, Wizard,” he said, turning from the instrument, “but do I not sense that the object is drawing away from the earth?”

“Good man! Yes, that’s what my own hasty calculations indicate... Well, it’s all very mysterious. I hardly know how to proceed further. I’ll compare notes tomorrow with the Professor. The observatory at the College is better equipped.”

“H. M.,” remarked the Patchwork Girl familiarly, “was at the party tonight—but he’s gone home. I think he did say he was going to do some observations.”

Nothing more could be accomplished before daylight. Even the Wizard got in an extra forty winks before the first clear ray of sun had braved the east... or west? By then our party of observers was awake and sitting all agog at the window. But they saw nothing.

It was little Trot who, standing and coming close to the win-

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dow, gazed out and all about and then exclaimed; “Look, everyone! High up—it’s getting lighter. But where’s the sun?!”

Why, the sun was in the east, of course. Nothing of the strange phenomena observable in Oz could affect *it*. But the observers were *not* in the east. The (formerly) east window they had gathered at looked, at present, straight out into the golden west. At least: it wasn’t so *very* golden. Under the paling indigo of the night sky everything in the scene outside looked strangely blue.

Then there was a wild scamper with no ceremony; *out* of the observatory room and down the winding stairway of the Wizard’s tower and through anterooms and presence chambers to the broad east-west corridor of the upper storey of the palace ran the crowd of observers straight on to the music room, where they flung open the door—to be met with a burst of golden glory!

They rushed to the windows and there was the orange sun! already well over the horizon and making everything look preternaturally yellow. “Why, I’ve never known the sun so bright and golden in the east before!” cried Ozma, quite overcome. The scene proved indeed later to have made a marvelously deep impression on the Girl Ruler. She could never afterwards really free herself of a feeling that the land of the morning sun was properly yellow.

“It’s never *been* so golden in the east before,” constated the Patchwork Girl matter-of-factly. From the high windows of the music room one could see well beyond the walls of the Emerald City where the greenswards blended with the color of the neighboring country. “That’s the yellow land of the Winkies,” Scraps went on. “And this is the first time they’ve ever *been* in the East.”

C H A P T E R T E N

"I hope I haven't neglected any point," Till muttered to himself. "There's so much-to think of!" He ran his finger down a check-list: "'complete fine-polishing; canting; two installations; fine-tune magic concentration; normals stationed; air coverage —Bay of Pigs'—no, we can scratch that;" his pencil jerked. "phone Lords; order in extra bagels, ice cream, honey' —Er, what does the cheetah eat, Oy?"

"Gazelles," replied Lev looking up from yesterday morning's *Emerald City Gozette*. "'gazelles'," wrote the Owl Practitioner. "'alert for social call; diplomacy...' Hmm, diplomacy..." Then louder, "Tell me, Mr. Lev; are you happy here?"

"'Happy'?" said the peddler, half-preoccupied. An article on an auction of old furniture and nicknacks at the Tin Wood man's palace had claimed his attention. "Unhappy I'm not," he went on, laying down the paper. "Why should you ask?"

"Oh, I just didn't want to think any of you have been bored here. I do appreciate your company and hope you're contented staying on a bit. But, er—just for a change, I wonder how you'd all like to go for an outing today...?"

"Suits me. Where had you in mind?" "Oh, I thought we might drive over the frontier and call on the Lords of Light."

"Could be interesting," admitted the merchant. "I've wanted

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to meet the Lords. I've called there a time or two on my rounds but they've always been out—or said they were."

"They usually are," confirmed Till. "They're rather shy of meeting the public. But we're almost neighbors and I've gained the entrée—a bit. I think they'll see us."

"Fine! I'll have along my samples case."

"If you like. But I had in mind a purely social visit." This was quite a lie—but Till's motives were almost never apparent.

That afternoon, eschewing Levimeyerabloch's flimsy gig, they harnessed the Sawhorse, the cheetah, two oxen, *and* the Woozy to Orangespiegel's heavy-duty dray (with surrey seating arrangement). "What in the world?" said Lev as he took his place among the impromptu livery-workmen.

"You'll forgive," said Orangespiegel. "A whim of mine. While we're at it—as you'll be showing your samples anyway—I thought I'd take along this mirror. He indicated an enormous rectangle of shiny glass in an iron encasement which, single-handed, he had maneuvered into position upon the mattress-padded flatbed by the use of a traveling crane. "—and get the Lords to do a little adjustment on it... I often call on them for such services," he fibbed.

Lev shrugged. "You all right, you fellows?" he called to their harnessed familiars.

The cheetah, Woozy, and Sawhorse all made convivial noises indicating they thought it was quite a lark. So the three human passengers boarded the dray and they started out.

Progress was not rapid. Indeed, the O.P. seemed pointedly to encourage dawdling. Soon after the departure they stopped for a long leisurely late lunch. This was when the bagels and ice cream were consumed. Some bees had trailed the honey pot, so the Woozy got both a meal and a social call. Till contented himself with a few oranges—and a dollop of marmalade for dessert. As for the cheetah's feeding, that went on behind a capacious screen erected for the occasion.

After that they all felt, except for the Sawhorse, rather somnolent, so there was another long stop for naps under the friendly

shade of a clump of poincianas.

The scenery was a bit Australian. What verdure there was was really rougure: long levels of dry-looking earth with scanty vegetation. The only real sight that broke the monotony was a distant glimpse, just as they crossed the border into Winkieland, of Till's tall tapering pane of orange glass erected exactly at the utmost corner of the habitable country. Underneath it, on the Oz side, a flash of light betrayed the presence of the newly-cast great polished mirror on its mathematically precisely tilted bed.

Levimeyerabloch took up a pair of binoculars. "Are those oxen I spy there? moving around the perimeter of the glass."

"Mm-hmm," agreed Till. "They're rigged up to keep settling dust constantly removed. And they'll burnish the glass right up to the last moment—or even beyond," he informed cryptically.

The peddler and his companions had been palmed off with an explanation of the practitioner's purposes with mirrors that need not concern us here. Nobody suspected a thing. They rode on.

The sun was beautifully orange and it must have been about five o'clock when the dray trundled over the drawbridge above the moat of molten gold at the Castle of Light. No one answered when they pulled the bell rope.

"Oh, how vexing!" said Till Orangespiegel with satisfaction. "Nobody home." He had been phoning all morning and never got an answer so he knew before they started out there would be nobody to receive them at the Lords'. Even the housekeeper and servants seemed absent, but that was par for the course. The castle staff were well known for ducking out on unauthorized holidays whenever the masters went from home.

The O.P. held the reins and directed as the dray was maneuvered backward through the castle portal and as far into the great reception hall as there was room to jockey it. Levimeyerabloch looked his mystification and presently Orangespiegel deigned to notice the look. "Oh, heavens, I'm not going to drag this thing home again," he protested, indicating the great looking-glass that covered the flatbed. "Now that I've

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got it here I'll leave it—with a note attached. The Lords can do the adjustments and I'll pick it up next time around.

"But now, you chaps, if you'll lend a hand...?" The practitioner looked a question at Lev and Button Bright.

The Woozy and the Sawhorse too were an essential part of the act. Together the three men heaved and tugged and got the great mirror shifted from the cart, then held each at a corner to lighten the weight as they laid it gently across the backs of the two animals. Then in a stately grave pavane they moved to the freight elevator.

The trip up to the tippy-top of the castle's central tower was the easiest part of the move. After that was to come another struggle, fairly exertious, to get the mirror positioned where they could leave it. "Now let's see," said Till, chin in hand, apparently in deepest cogitation. In fact, with detailed planning down to the last nut and screw, he knew precisely what he was going to do. Not in vain were all the friendly impromptu calls he had made on the lords of Light over the years. He knew in exact detail the habits, and the working of the apparatus, of the Lords.

"Oh I know!" he now said brightly. "We'll just stand it up in this slot effect—" He gestured toward a construction of two great parallel flanges of steel, like the coin receptacle—only vast—on a slot-machine. "That way it'll be out of the way—and not get trodden on; yet they can't help but notice it."

In fact the device was the Lords' modest, rather old-fashioned, launching pad for data-gathering projectiles they occasionally fired off into orbit around the earth. Immense springs mounted in an angle upward from the contraption toward buttressed walls while others descended into the floor. It was like a vast stationary slingshot—but *so* vast that the casual observer could not descry its function.

Even so, Levimeyerabloch was beginning to grow, suspicious. This whole performance was too pat. There was nothing of the impromptu about it. Nevertheless he was unable to guess what it was all in aid of. When, however, the O.P. next asked for his assistance, he demurred.

“You must forgive me, O.P.,” he said with an ingratiating smile. “I don’t even know these people. What if they were to come in and find me taking part in the manipulation of their machinery?”

“Oh, very well!” said Till disgruntledly. “You all can wait in the lounge downstairs if you like. I’ll just be a tick. But, oh! - if you *would* just do me one little thing—in a few minutes...? You don’t have to come back up in the tower! Quite the contrary. I want you, if you will, to go outside; out on the alkali flat beyond the moat, and just hold up this mirror—” Here he took from his pocket a shiny round looking-glass about as big as the palm of a hand .

Lev reached as if to take it but quickly Till withdrew his hand. “Sorry! I have one small adjustment to make to it” — though how one went about “adjusting” a simple highly polished disc of glass and silver was left unexplained. “I’ll bring it down to you directly . “

Again Levimeyerabloch lifted his shoulders in a gesture of resignation and turned to re-enter the lift with his companions. But here Button Bright, who had been sitting on a table of logarithms, swinging his legs and poking holes in his straw hat, delivered a small surprise. “I’ll stay here,” he announced.

Lev and Till looked at him startled, but no one had any objection to make. The others departed and Button looked on idly as Orangespiegel went to a laboratory work-bench, lit a Bunsen burner, and placed the round mirror in the bottom of a wide shallow fireproof stoneware bowl on the table. Then he took from a satchel he carried a twist of paper which contained, it may as well be confessed, the magic precipitates from Levimeyerabloch’s pillowcase, oil lamp, cheese, and gnats’-eyebrows, together with any number of other ingredients the Owl Practitioner had been able to accumulate over the years.

The boy slipped down from the table lackadaisically and came and stood near as the O.P. very carefully, not neglecting even one grain, heaped the magic upon the mirror in the bowl. Then from another twist of paper he slid out, over the little

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mound of magic, a dark scarlet powder until the heap of grains underneath was completely covered.

The O.P. glanced at his watch. "6:18," he muttered. "Not bad." He went to a southwest window and looked out. Not a cloud blemished the sunset sky over the desert. That'd be the day! He took up the binoculars and noted with satisfaction that the rays of the setting sun striking through the great upright pane of orange glass fell nearly exactly athwart the long tilted oblong mirror that lay on the desert floor. The oxen had ceased their sweeping action and for the moment the looking-glass shone pristine—and orange! as nothing in this world.

Now Till Orangespiegel made haste. The burner by a simple adjustment, did duty as a blow torch. Till flicked the switch, took up the instrument—and turned to Button Bright. "Stand back," he cautioned brusquely. "There's likely to be a good deal of smoke. You might just open those windows..."

Another glance at the watch. This was the moment. The Owl Practitioner lowered the blow-burner over the bowl, then suddenly switched it to full power. A most horrendous explosion took place and a blinding opaque billow of cochineal smoke choked the room, sending its occupants into violent paroxysms of coughing.

The draft Master Bright had created quickly did its work, however. In a moment the O.P. could be seen flapping his arms in the vermilion murk and then he had regained the work table and was fishing with tongs for the round mirror in the bowl. Strangely, the glass appeared unblackened - and even unorange —by the treatment it had undergone.

It seemed not even to be hot. But then that was magic. "Here, boy!" commanded Orangespiegel. "Run down with this to Oy—Levimeyerabloch. He knows what to do, but if he hesitates, remind him: to hold it—glass up!!—in his open palm and direct it at any moving thing he sees in the upper sky—or, if none, then simply at the zenith... Got that?"

Button nodded, took the small mirror, and went out, running down the stairs in default of the elevator, which no one

had thought to resummon.

Now it was the turn of Till Orangespiegel's most vital project —though all were of the essence: very much so. Using all his strength he set the great lever-cock on the satellite launcher. There was a button he could have touched that would have done it automatically—but he didn't know *every* one of the Lords' secrets.

Next he pulled from right to left the great switch handle on the wall which made the turret roof of the observatory chamber lift and angle back out of the way. All was now in readiness! With crossed fingers—but a nonchalant air—Orangespiegel pressed the trigger that released the cocking mechanism.

So swiftly that eye could not see its passage the huge steel-backed mirror was slung into space. Now if those idiots on the ground were only on their toes...!

C H A P T E R

E L E V E N

“One... more... step, Lao-Tsen,” said the Frogman somewhat anticipatorily—but then his mind was wandering: at moments into the future “One... more... step...!”

“I can go... no further,” said Cayke the cook, who also knew her lines. “You must go on without me.”

The frog omitted to hop again and turned his heavy head to look at his companion. “Oh, no,” he sighed, “I won’t do that... We must struggle on together.”

After two more feeble leaps, “It’s strange,” gasped the Frogman. “I had no idea the area east of our mountain—well, west—was... so very much ... like a desert.”

“‘Like a desert’,” Cayke still had spark enough to echo ironically. “This is... a desert.”

The frog was too exhausted to register his dismay. But his great eyes drooped to the ground—and opened wider. The woman was not crazy. The sands over which they plodded were by no means any longer orange. They were not even yellow—or sand-colored. They were white.

The frog himself went-white: as white as a yellow—well, chartreuse—frog can go. There were no white sands in Oz! What small deserts there were shared the dominant hue of the country they lay in, as the blue desert of Mudge or the yellow sands

of Samandra. If these sands were white then they had strayed out upon the Great (not to say, Deadly) Desert.

Yipe. In moments they would be disintegrated. And yet...they had already been for moments — or more — upon the white sands and they were not yet disintegrated. Then the Frogman, tired and dehydrated as he was, recalled that after all the deserts surrounding Oz were not all *that* deadly. There was the legend which had entered all the history books about the confrontation of the good and bad witches the first time Princess Ozma had been disenchanting. That had taken place on desert sands just outside the borders of Oz and none of the personages involved had remarked on physical discomfort, let alone disintegration, during their stay in the wilderness.

He breathed a little easier but not much. No wonder they were such a long time in getting to the Castle of Light! Admittedly they had not glimpsed the castle since sunup but the frog had kept faithfully to the directions he had set for them in advance: north by northwest.

Like those resident in the Palace of Magic in the Emerald City he had been relieved to find that the sun still came up in the east. Also, through it all, north remained north. He drew out his pocket compass.

The needle still wavered sensitively at the top of the dial. And they were still trudging faithfully a few degrees to the left (that is, what had once been right) of north. How could they have gone wrong?

As it happened they were not to be kept long in ignorance. The two sank down on a dune and the frog passed the cook his water bottle. (They had not been totally improvident when setting out thus impromptu on their pilgrimage.) The woman had just raised the container greedily to her lips when a thundering sound was heard: the first sound of any sort, aside from the faint swishing noise of their own steps through the sand, that they had heard all day.

They had actually raised their heads to scan for thunder *clouds* when they saw breast a particularly lofty dune in the distance a

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crowd of burnoosed riders. In a swirl of draperies the veiled men drew rein and looked toward our travelers. Then, shouting *The Riffsong*, they spurred their mounts and swept forward.

Down the dune and over the sands they flew. In a blinding swirl of dust they jerked their steeds to a halt beside the cowering Ozites, left off singing, and leapt to the ground. There were eighteen of them. "Hail!" yelled one who appeared to be their leader, then without waiting for any answer ran to Cayke, threw a billowing serape over her, lifted her up in one bold swooping gesture, and flung her across the back of his horse. (Though there were no horses, except saw-, in Oz in those days, there were plenty elsewhere.)

Cayke had no time to utter a syllable but the Frogman yelped "Help!" feebly as seven strong men wrestled him to the ground (where he was already). A mundane rope, no elegant serape, was used to inhibit, in a twinkling, his movements, and then he too was hoisted aboard a horse. With coarse oaths and ribaldry the brigands wheeled their animals and galloped off. Upside-down as he was, the Frogman still had the use of his eyes and great was his amazement when amidst the sun-blinding white that jounced down and up all about him he presently descried sparkling green heavenly color! in the waterless waste. Well might the Spanish poet one day cry, "Green! green! I love you, green!"

On pounded the corsair crew until they reined up within the perimeter of the oasis, where the two captives were unceremoniously dumped on the ground. After the first greeting, if so it might be called, not a word had been addressed to the frightened pair, but now the leader, still a-mount, paused dramatically, pulled down the concealing scarf from his face, and uttered "That way!" as he pointed off into what, to judge by the sun, was the east.

His brilliant eyes flashed, his brilliant teeth gleamed in one wolfish leer, then the veil was abruptly thrust in place again, the muscular brown hand flew high in signal to his men, and the whole horde wheeled and galloped away into the shimmering

heat of the desert.

"Oh!" cried Cayke, unwrapping her head from the serape which still enfolded her form. "Was that a sheik?!"

"It may well be," grunted the frog, struggling to undo himself from his bonds. "I wonder... would you mind awfully...?"

But Cayke had no mind for mundane matters. "Wasn't he *romantic!*!" she gushed.

The one glimpse she had had of the bedouin's bright eye before he ravished her away (in sense number one of the dictionary) made an impression she was never to forget.

Her question was rhetorical but the Frogman, immobilized as he was, had leisure to ponder it and reply. "Was he? I hardly noticed. His companions, however, I observed to be most skilful with knots. Do you suppose they might be sailors?...?" but one further glance across the white wastes dispelled that fancy."Now then, my dear Cake if you *could* inconvenience yourself...?!"

By now the frog had both flippers free but they availed him nothing in his struggle with the rope. Yet the moment the cookie cook applied her hand to the knotty problem, the tangle fell away between her fingers, the rope slumped loosely to the ground—and shrank away to three feet, six inches long!

The Frogman rose up, feeling fully fit again, and he and the cookie cook stared at each other across the coppery-gleaming rope. "Now what do you make of that?" said he in some awe. "Magic again, I'll be bound! or rather, no! I won't be bound! But I think I will just hold onto this rope." Saying so, the frog looped the length of plaiting about his shoulder.

The couple now took the opportunity to look around them. A cool blue-green path led away among towering date palms which, agitated by the desert breeze which here, however, blew coolly, obligingly sprinkled their fruits down upon the two wanderers. Cayke and her companion were not slow to gather up some of the chewy delicacies and stuff their mouths and pockets with them.

Soon they came to the first of a number of cool green lotus

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pools and the Frogman, with a scant "Excuse me, my dear!" leapt with a mighty leap incontinently into the middle of it. His tattered finery could look no more bedraggled than it did already and, indeed, might afterwards appear actually fresher for the rinsing.

A duck and a splash, a few mighty pushes of the great hind legs through the water, and then the frog was fresh as home-made and crawled upon the bank ready for anything. "Aren't you hot?" he cried in surprise to see his companion sitting on the shore still closely wrapped round in the black-and-beige blanket her kidnapper had placed there.

Cayke shook her head. "No," she said; "you see, *he* put it round me. I won't have it off again."

"Good gracious," said the Frogman. "You *have* got it bad."

He gave the woman a long and searching look as he squatted beside her. He himself entertained no romantic fancies concerning the female participant in his adventures. He was after all a *frog* (he didn't *think* he was a prince under an enchantment!) and it would have been against nature to desire a *human* mate. But he could see that Cayke was not a bad-looking woman. She might well have attracted a gentleman's eye—or, as in the present case, been herself attracted by—well, scarcely a gentleman.

It was with something more of fellow-sympathy and gentleness that he presently assisted her to her feet and they moved on. "But just the same," he enquired, "isn't it awfully warm inside the—er, shawl?"

"No, that's the wonderful part." Cayke sighed with satisfaction. "It's so lovely and cool. I feel I don't need another thing while I keep it close about me. Have you noticed?; I haven't even wanted to drink again."

It was quite true. The frog himself, of course, had drunk voluptuously while he was in the pool.

They made their way on—through charming tropical alleys where every prospect pleased, Here were irrigated vegetable patches, there a grove of lemon trees, then a tiny village where

shy brown urchins looked at them with sidelong glances, then ventured to thrust out dusky palms and beg for baksheesh. Coming from Oz, however, the travelers had none to give them.

The signs of habitation were left behind, they entered a veritable little jungle of palms and tamarinds, and once beyond it could see the desert again, while close beside them was a dusty corral where discontented-looking camels crouched on the ground and chewed the cud.

As they passed alongside the enclosure, "I wish we had a couple of those ships of the desert to help us on our way" escaped the Frogman.

To their astonishment a voice replied, "I doubt if it would do you much good," and a dromedary more disgruntled-looking than the general run turned a jaundiced eye upon he passers-by.

"Oh, it might be rather nice," disagreed other, more genial, Bactrian camel that opened sleepy eyes and smiled benignly in the direction of the frog and the cookie cook .

"Did you speak?" enquired the frog politely.

"Of course," answered the dromedary. "You're speaking, aren't you? Why shouldn't we? "

"Oh, but I'm from Oz," explained the Frogman. "It's normal there for other-than-humans to speak."

"So are we," uttered the dromedary with a sniff of obviousness.

"Are you indeed?" cried the frog, stopping to stare.

"But, er—may I ask what brings you here?"

"Even we," said the dromedary-with-a-grievance, "like to be with our own kind now and then." Blandly it gazed out over the herd of silent, grumpily ruminant animals.

"Er—yes, of course," the frog hastened to agree,

"There are no other camels in Oz - that I ever heard of." The dromedary looked at his placidly chewing compatriate for confirmation.

"That's right, my dear."

The Frogman, feeling fresh and vigorous since his plunge,

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was in his normal disputatious mood. "Pardon me," he now ventured, "but, strictly speaking, your friend isn't a camel, is he? I mean, he's got two humps.

"So? You think perhaps she should have three?"

"Oh, no, but a two-humped camel is called a 'dromedary', isn't he?—*not* a 'camel'."

"Oh, dear, that's a *very* vulgar misconception," snorted the dromedary. "A two-humped camel is by very definition not a dromedary. It's called a 'Bactrian' camel—though who or where 'Bacter' was I've no idea. Conversely, *by* definition, a dromedary is a light fleet Arabian-type *one*-humped camel. The ones on the cigarette packets, you know." The dromedary polished its hoof on its lapel. "I'm *very* fleet," he added.

"Hm," sighed the Frogman, grateful for the information but even more bemused by the thought of such a fleet creature under him to speed the weary miles that loomed before him and the cookie cook.

The comfortable-looking camel now put in a word. "I say, Med, these people were hinting they could use a ride. Isn't it time we were moving on ourselves?"

The dromedary turned a sceptical eye on his mate. "Well, if *you* say so: of course. Which will you have? The woman? I suppose so; you're more comfortable. I'll carry the frog fellow. We can argue as we go along."

The Frogman could not keep from leaping in delight. But so far Cayke had said nothing, standing beside her frog companion outside the enclosure and humming "Poor Butterfly". Now she spoke.

"Oh, dear, must we leave?"

"Of course," croaked the frog in surprise. "We must get on, and find out what made our directions go west—or wherever they did go. Why, what did you ...?" he trailed off, puzzled.

"I was just thinking; if I were to stay here, I might, one day... see—*him* again."

"Oh, my dear Cayke, this is most alarming," blurted the frog, upset as everyone is when any new element changes an

acquaintance's life, no matter how lackluster that life has been before. He enumerated all the reasons why she should not stay at the oasis but should follow him to the Castle of Light.

"Very well," complied Cayke reluctantly, as she let herself be hoisted up between the two humps of the camel. Then she said, like Manon, "You'll be sorry." Perhaps what she meant was that *she'd* be sorry.

C H A P T E R

T W E L V E

It seemed that Princess Ozma could not tear herself away from the windows of the music room. Something about that golden dawn held her enthralled. "It's... as if it were *meant* to be," she murmured to herself.

The others were all on the other side of the room holding a conference about what to do next. They were convinced they ought to do *something* but there was a general feeling that this situation was bigger than all of them.

The Cowardly Lion had rejoined the group after going off in the course of the night to sleep in the gueststalls. Professor Wogglebug was there too and with him a young student in charge of a wheelbarrow full of books of mathematics, physics, cartography, and astronomy. There, surely, was to be found all the orthodox information that could help them in the present emergency. The only trouble was that the emergency was so *unorthodox*.

"Well, I think we ought to go see Glinda about it," declared Dorothy. "She'll know what to do. Or if she can't advise us about what's likely to happen at least she can tell us what *did* happen. It'll all be there in the Great Book of Records. There might well be clues as to what caused it."

No one really had any better suggestion and after kicking

the idea around for a while they all agreed to it. Then they came to tell their Queen what they had decided. Ozma was still gazing out the window. And as she watched there came, she thought, a change. Had the sun gone behind a cloud? Things didn't look any more so golden as they had done. But no, not a cloud was to be seen in the sky. Nor was the sun.

That was distinctly odd. Ozma jumped up just as Dorothy and Betsy reached her side. "More mysteries, I'm afraid, darlings," she reported quietly. "I'm afraid I've mislaid the sun. I had it here just a minute ago."

Dorothy pouted. "Your Highness, do be sensible. Whatever do you mean?"

A trill of laughter escaped the queen. "It's quite true. How long have we been here? Forty-five minutes. The sun should be just high in the eastern sky—but it isn't."

Betsy had been more pragmatic. She didn't stop to argue but craned her neck out the window and peered everywhere. "Why, there it is!" she exclaimed and pointed south along the outer wall of the palace toward high noon. Then a frown troubled her brow and she put her watch to her ear.

"Eight-fourteen," said the watch.

"Oh, fiddlesticks!" she cried. "The sun can't be *there* at 8:14."

Now Ozma was staring out the window again. "Correct me if I'm wrong, my dears, but aren't the suburbs of the capital growing by leaps and bounds? Look!"

The Wogglebug was among those who heard her and he quoted from memory; "Following the modern trend to urbanization the outskirts of metropolitan Emerald City have been attracting new residents at the rate of six a year—"

"No, no," interrupted the queen, "I don't mean people-wise. Look! it's green as far as the eye can see. Admittedly rather a pale green. But remember?!: just a little while ago it was all gloriously yellow out to the skyline.

"Let me see!" Princess Dorothy took charge and pushed through the little crowd at the window. "'Green'? I'd say it's peacock or turquoise, if anything—!"

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Betsy confirmed: “Yes, there do seem to be aquamarine overtones.”

Scraps put in her two cents’ worth:

“They used to call *me* ‘Patchwork Girl’

Because I was so pied.

But I’ve got nothing on a place

That’s yellow-blue outside.”

It was the fateful word “blue” that filled them all with a wild surmise. The sun had now gone quite out of sight round the side of the palace and all the shadows on the lawn beneath the windows were at a *very* queer angle, considering it to be morning.

Suddenly, like a flock of starlings, all the courtiers and their girl ruler were seized with one impulse and they bolted from the room and galloped through the palace again, along the broad west-east corridor, through presence chambers and anterooms. Then in the confusion—and there was plenty of it—Ozma in the lead (who ought to have known better) took a wrong turning and in a moment the flying column found itself brought up against a blank wall. They retraced their steps part-way, but got worst lost than ever.

Unfortunately the wizard, Oz Diggs, in his designing days had laid out the Palace of Magic exactly symmetrically. Standing in the center of the building you had halls and rooms on either hand which were all mirror images of their counterparts on the complementary side of the palace. Now if your directions, as now, were suddenly set at nought, there was simply no way, inside the palace, to know whether you were going left or right.

They blundered about—and then young Trot pointed out a stairway they had overlooked before. “Isn’t that the way to your tower, Wizard?” she asked.

“You know, I think you’re right,” sighed the genial sorcerer in relief. “I recognize that putto on the banister head.”

Then off they went again! up, up, the ninety-five steps to the blue door, which they flung open—to find everything also blue

within. Not because the Wizard had had it decorated that way but just because the morning sun, shining in across so many miles of Munchkin landscape, brought blue with it.

Ozma sat right down on a footstool and cried. Now it became evident to all why she had taken no active part in the deliberations aimed at curing the crossed directions of the land. "Oh. I'm so disappointed," she wept—but nothing loud and vulgar, of course. "I thought it was so wonderful with the east all golden—and so... right, somehow. After all, they do speak of 'the golden dawn' but of 'the blue of evening'..."

"That's right," Dorothy, the conservative, was constrained to admit. "I never heard anybody talk about 'the blue dawn'."

"But there is 'the golden afternoon'," put in Trot, still remembering *Alice*.

"You're right, dear;" and Ozma squeezed Trot's hand. "But just the same..."

The others tended to be sanguine about the matter. "So we needn't rush off to the Good Sorceress after all," spoke Oz Diggs with a certain amount of satisfaction at not having to own himself stumped or to call in a more capable colleague. "Just the same, I'd like to know what that was all about—and whether we need fear a repetition."

Ozma rose to her feet—and was a Queen again.

"You're right of course, Wizard. The matter should be got to the bottom of - and whoever was responsible—er, punished." The little fairy never really relished punishing anybody.

"I think the best thing I can do will be to continue my astronomical observations," pursued the Wizard.

"Oh, yes, there *was* that—'tea-tray in the sky'," recalled the fairy princess. "You think then that that apparition may have had something to do with it?"

"There's hardly a doubt of it, I should say," affirmed the savant.

That same evening at dinner the Wizard of Oz was able to announce that all indications were that the mysterious "tray" had flown on around behind the moon. "If the object was some-

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how connected with the curious manifestations we observed, certainly our fellow planet would interpose a very effective shield against its workings.”

A glance out the window would have informed anyone who cared to look that the moon, indeed, was no longer blue.

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

“Hot ziggety!” cried Till Orangespiegel and spun around on one toe in glee. “It works!!” Then he rushed to one of the opened windows and flung his upper body across the sill to peer at the ground below. Did his eyes deceive him? or was not the dusty earth beyond the moat a fine cinnabar hue?

Yes, surely! Even now waves of increasing orangeness flooded out from the point where he could see Levimeyerabloch aiming the little hand mirror at the sky. But the fool! Why was he swinging it back and forth in that way?! Couldn’t he see the ‘satellite’ he was supposed to be training it on? Till squinted at the sky. Well, no, it *couldn’t* be seen any longer, certainly not by the naked eye. Maybe that was Oy’s idea of aiming it at the ‘zenith’! Maybe he didn’t know where the zenith was either..?!

In a fury Orangespiegel dashed down the spiral stairway, not waiting any longer than Button Bright had done for the lift. “Idiot! “ he fumed as he ran; “and scoundrel!” What if Lev were doing it on purpose? Certainly he would break up the magic vibrations if he kept that up!

He clattered across the central hall in his wooden shoes and out upon the drawbridge. “Oy, Gewalt!” he yelled as he ran. “No, I mean ‘Gewalt!, Oy!’; mit aller Gewalt, stop that!!”

Wondering, the peddler paused in his pendulating. At least

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he did not drop his hand but held it, by a special effort, fairly steady-aimed against the sky. The pulsating of the orange wave of color slowed down and stopped and the hue seemed to flow in a smooth thick sweep. Soon all Oz would be orange—according to the Owl Practitioner’s calculations—and he hugged his sides.

His impulse was to grab the mirror and direct it himself. But no, that would never do. It must be held by “Oy”. But in his frustration he yelled, “What’s the matter; aren’t you normal?! Can’t you hold the thing still? just aim it straight up?!”

Levimeyerabloch’s boiling point was high but even so *his* impulse was to dash the mirror to the ground. From the word Go there was something very shady about this whole affair, and then to receive a tongue-lashing to boot! It was not to be borne. The possibility was not ruled out that he had already performed as an accomplice to high crimes and misdemeanors. These waves of color that were shooting over the ground! That wasn’t normal for a start. Oz was being turned a whole different hue!

And the O.P’ s intrusion without so much as a by-your-leave into the sanctum of the dread Lords of Light! For that alone they would probably end up doing time. The peddler experienced the gravest qualms, and wished himself anywhere but where he was.

Button Bright and the animals were taking it more calmly. Nothing ever ruffled the Sawhorse’s composure, or if it did you could hardly tell, so impassive was he. The good-natured Woozy was gruzzing in a clump of tamarisks and feeling no pain. The Charming Cheetah was nowhere to be seen. And Master Bright was enjoying the color display, which he interpreted as an extension of the ‘fireworks’ show he had taken part in in the castle tower—which of course it was. He had told something: the inessentials—of his experience there to the peddler but so inconclusive was his account that Lev could not make out what had really taken place.

Whatever it was seemed to be to the Owl Practitioner’s taste. He had resumed dancing his jig and the satisfaction he obvi-

ously felt was reflected in a mildening of his manner. "Sorry, old man!" he exclaimed, almost really contritely. "You know I'm a bit of a tease. I apologize for my gruffness but I hated anything to go wrong. It's a—er, birthday treat I'm planning for my old pals, the Lords. Old Aunt Luce's birthday is tomorrow—and won't the family be pleased when they come home and find their property all done over in the most beautiful color in the world?!"

There was no doubt of the done-overness. The wave of orangety had swept not only over the ground but also crept up the walls of the once golden castle and rendered it, in the dusky light of late sunset, a sanguineous tangerine. Till folded his arms, leaned back, and stared at it in delighted fascination.

Then with a slapping brushing 'that's-that' gesture of hands he turned and said brightly, "Well, shall we be trotting home again?" And answer came there some: every one was pleased to quit the role of uninvited guest and with murmurs of content they moved with one accord toward the dray.

His duty with the hand mirror was apparently done then and Levimeyerabloch handed it to its owner and yoohooed up the cheetah, who emerged from a thicket of mock-orange, looking unsatisfied. No gazelles there, it would seem. But now, with the heavy ('middle') mirror removed, there was no need for the sprightly creature to enter the traces. He and the Woozy leapt (or were lifted) into the back of the dray. The oxen and Sawhorse could cope on their own between the shafts.

Away then into the falling night. At first all went well. After their exertions, greater or lesser, the three humans took turns at short sitting naps. But then when nine o'clock (or thereabouts) came they thought they'd like to arrive home again at the spherodome, where Mistress Pill no doubt was keeping a nice supper warm for them. Her brother even mentioned something about a caneton à l'orange he had requested be prepared.

But where were they? The moon had not yet risen and none of them were sufficiently accomplished mariners to navigate by the stars. The featureless landscape would have told them little

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even if they could have made it out. There was nothing for it but to keep rumbling forward by instinct. Stopping and standing, they all agreed, could avail them nought.

In an idle gesture (for knowing the time would not be germane to finding their way) Lev struck a match and looked at his watch.

Was he losing his mind? The watch face was backwards.

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

Fast was the dreary season of wandering redeless in the desert. The frog and the cookie cook gave them their heads and the two camels lurched rapidly across the burning sands. Having no watches or clocks to bother them, the quadrupeds had never realized that directions were reversed, nor that now they had been unreversed. They just headed for where they knew Oz to lie and their riders let them lurch.

It was still only just past noon but a mad time to be out in the sun, especially for a frog in the desert. Cayke was cool in her serape but the Frogman's eyes were starting out of his head in parched distress as he scanned the horizon for any sign of another oasis. Even a mirage would be better than nothing. Thus it was that he was first to descry orangeness in the distance.

Orange?! What could that be? The Frogman suspected a figment of his fevered brain. But no, the swift plodding of their beasts brought them every moment nearer to what could only be described as an orange landscape. Well, it wasn't Oz, that was for sure. That there was no orange country in the magic land was one piece of information the Frogman had picked up during his season at the capital.

No matter. The land ahead was not desert and that was so much to the good. There would be plant life there—and water!

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Already the Frogman could make out orange trees—with apples hanging from them.

But there was something more. Just a little to the left—yes, that definitely *was* left—the land was yellow, and that realization was a greater satisfaction to the Frogman than even the sighting of non-desert had been. It must be the land of the Winkie's, and so they were back at square one.

The camels hurried on, crossed out of the zone of blinding sands, and came soon to an orange grove of coconut palms. At least: it wasn't all orange. The trees farther on were clearly yellow. Pretty but puzzling. They pressed forward.

And now they heard voices. Yes, any number of them, and apparently quarreling at the top of their bent. The two camels came round a thicket of tamaracks and brought their riders within view of a very queer crew. In or out of a clumsy old wagon painted bright orange (with powder-blue arabesques) were standing or sitting two men and a boy, two oxen and a cheetah, and a couple of artificial animals which by rights ought not to have been talking—or even living.

"Lily pads and lotus!" gasped the parched and panting Frogman. "It isn't—? it isn't—! Yes, it is! the Sawhorse of Oz! and the equally famous Woozy!" Then, physically and emotionally overexposed, he fainted, sliding down off the dromedary with a rush and a sqwush.

The (to those already there) equally startling irruption of the camel travelers proved a diversion which the giant frog's fainting 'fit immediately reinforced. They turned as one to stare and then to begin to make their way toward them.

"Hi, Froggers! " called Button Bright, who was never put out of countenance by any surprising thing that happened. As they made their way toward the newcomers he explained to Levimeyerabloch, "That's the Frogman."

"So I see," said Lev, who had his own recollections of the curious individuals to be met with at various times at the Emerald City.

To Till Orangespiegel it was all new, however, and he

hurried forward outstripping the others. "Tsch-tsch," he tacked, "what's the matter? Is your friend ill?" he called to the black-and-beige-clad woman who sat ensconced between the two humps of her camel and looked distressed.

"He's been suffering from the sun - and thirst," she explained — where another might have said "dehydration".

"Aha! water!" cried Till sagely. It was left, however, to Button Bright to duck out of sight to a water hole he had noticed a little way back. He was gone an inordinate length of time. When Levimeyerabloch eventually went to find him the lad was discovered sitting on a fallen palm log, idly stirring the muddy water of the sink-hole with a stick.

"Stop that," said the peddler and flung his bandanna into the pool to moisten it. "I thought you were coming after water."

"I was," confirmed the boy and pointed to his straw hat that lay bottom-side up on the bank, full of the holes he had providently poked there.

"Never mind. Come back," ordered Lev. They returned to the knot of people under the coconut trees, who seemed, under pressure of the emergency, to have got more or less acquainted.

Cayke had selflessly taken off her shawl to spread over her fallen companion and its curious cooling action was rapidly restoring the frog to a semblance of normality. When he was ambulatory the peddler and Till Orangespiegel each took an elbow and helped him to the water hole, into which the Frogman subsided, rear first, and soon he was chipper again.

The travelers by dray now had leisure to take up their quarrel again and they were soon going it hot and heavy. "They've been at it for hours," Button Bright revealed in an aside to the cookie cook. However he left her to decide for herself just *what* the merchant and the Owl Practitioner were disputing about.

The crux of the matter-was this: Till Orangespiegel was cross as could be because the entire country was not orange, and Levimeyerabloch was indignant and feeling betrayed because any of it was.

"It's not like I planned!" cried Till for the manyeth time and

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stamped his foot. "What went wrong?! All my calculations were done with precision down to the minus-ninth degree. The entire country should be a rich and glowing sun-color by now! Oh, shut up!" he yelled at Lev the peddler, who was contending that none of Oz should be orange—it never had been and hence never ought to be.

The revived frog took a sudden sharp interest. "Tell me," he interposed, resting his elbows on the rim of the water hole, "do you come from the Castle of Light?" he asked with rapt attention.

The disputants stopped in their wrangle and stared. "Why—er, yes—in a sense. What makes you ask that?"

Then the Frogman related in detail his experience of—could it be only?—the afternoon before. "Suddenly everything went orange!" he recalled, "like waves of color welling out from the castle as center. It was so strange and unaccountable a phenomenon that I at once resolved to set out and discover what its origin was. That's why we chance to be here, in fact."

"Hurrah!, hurrah!" shrieked the Owl Practitioner. "So it could be seen from Mount Yip?! It *was* working!... But what went wrong?" he reiterated. "Why aren't *all* these trees orange?—not just half. See there!" and he pointed to a yellow palm just north of the water hole. "What made it stop?... Tell me, Mr. Frog —"

"'Fruakx' is the name," inserted the frog, "'Frederick Fruakx'—though most often I as called simply 'the Frogman'." For some reason this information brought a chortle of surprise and satisfaction from the boy Button. The others stared, just slightly.

"Mr. Fruakx then," pursued the O.P. "did you see that—er, color wave stop? I mean; it didn't keep on expanding outward (as it should have done!)"

"Oh, I didn't stop to watch," said the frog. "You see, something else queer happened at just the same time, something that disoriented me completely and quite put the matter of the color-wave out of my mind."

"And what was that?"

"Well, you see, suddenly everything was back to front—or, I

should say, left to right—and vice-versa. For a season I didn't know whether I was coming on or going—"

"There, you see!" cried Levimeyerabloch in triumph. "Directions were reversed! This is independent testimony!"

"You're crazy," stated the practitioner bluntly. In fact this had been the peddler's own immediate assessment of his case the night before but when he had showed his watch to Orangespiegel and the latter had refused to credit the very evidence of his eyes Lev turned to believing the O.P. was the crazy one.

"How could anything like that happen?" Till had demanded indignantly. "It's unheard of. And besides, it's impossible."

They had argued all night, while the dray blundered on—in who knew which direction? Just before dawn they stopped, by common consent, and flopped in the back of the wagon upon the old mattress and quilted blankets that had served to cushion the 'middle' mirror. There they all remained sleeping till hours after sun-up.

When they started on again in the morning Levimeyerabloch had to admit that perhaps, worn out by the contretemps of the day, he had been hallucinating. His watch presented a normal—and cheerful—face, nor was any other evidence to be observed that right had ever been wrong. He had sat silent on the surrey-seat while Till drove and exulted. But Lev experienced in his turn a little schadenfreude when, on entering an orange coconut grove, they were suddenly brought up short by the sight of a band of lemon(-colored) trees.

Orangespiegel burst into a torrent of fury and abuse, of which the so-called Oy, already in the dog-house, conveniently became the butt. They were disputing violently over who was crazy now when the camel caravan appeared on the scene.

Levimeyerabloch was now clearly coming off the winner. On hearing his report the merchant felt a sudden surge of affection for the—really very imposing and dignified—overgrown frog. "'Crazy' is it?" he rebutted to the O.P. "I'm crazy. Mr. Fruakx is crazy. Madam here I presume is also crazy. But *you're* not crazy...!? So who's crazy?"

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"Tell me it's a lie," Till pleaded of the frog. "Tell me you're making it up!"

"Why, no, I never lie," stated the Frogman gravely. "I can't—even if I should wish to." And then while he continued to enjoy the coolth of the pool and everyone else sweated and fretted, he related at length how, in another world far away, he had fallen, or been pushed, into the Truth Pond^s and thenceforth was forever prevented from telling a fib.

"So you see," crowed the peddler. "I wasn't insane! Things *were* switched around." He stopped his unbecoming self-justification in the sudden grip of interest in the ramifications of the phenomenon: "Tell me:" he entreated of the Frogman, "how did you know things were reversed?"

"Well, let me see." The frog pondered. "First I couldn't find my way: Mistress Cayke's cottage which I intended to visit had always stood in the west of our village but when I got there I found the duffel-grinder's shop in its place. *That* had always been in the east—"

Lev broke in: "There was no mix-up between north and south? that you could see." He was beginning to have shrewd suspicions. "Why, no," said the frog, surprised. "That never occurred to me. North and south have seemed to remain in their traditional orientation. This new switch was only a mirror image—"

"A-ha!" shouted the peddler with sudden conviction—and a lovely feeling of self-righteousness. "This is all *your* doing!" He pointed the accusing finger at his erstwhile host and client Till Orangespiegel. "It was all your mumbo-jumbo with mirrors brought this about! You've bewitched the whole countryside. Heaven knows how far the havoc may reach!"

"Reached," was all the failed practitioner could summon up of words to defend himself with. He was feeling properly cowed.

He had been forcibly, tangibly, brought to face the fact of the ruin of his true enterprise, the orangification of all Oz. Now it seemed that, contrariwise, he had wrought mischief infinitely

§ See *The Lost Princess of Oz*. Editor's note.

more widespread (though luckily perhaps only temporary) than a mere rehuing of the country. Because of what had happened (if it were *not* temporary) the entire nation would be up in arms and he the scapegoat of the people's fury. That was enough to give pause to even such an egoist as Till Orangespiegel. His only loophole did seem to be the fact that for the time being the reversal effect appeared to have waned.

"Reached," he repeated subduedly. "It's not doing it any more."

"But just what was it you did?" asked the Frogman, in his eagerness hauling himself out of the water hole. This was after all what he had come all this way to find out.

"Nothing," averred the O.P., even now trying to own as little as possible of his guilt. "A little trick with mirrors. We're known in our family for our way with tricks—and treats. This was to be a birthday treat for old Lady Luce at the Castle. It's not a permanent effect, as you can see—" Strictly speaking, nobody could see that the new orangeness wasn't permanent. And since the change of color scheme for the part of Oz affected remains in force to this day they were right in so not seeing.

"But it seems something went a little haywire. I never planned for directions to go topsy-turvy and I still don't admit that I'm responsible. What would I do a thing like that for? What benefit could that be to me?"

No one *could* think of a reason why anyone would want everything to be rear-backwards so they gave him the benefit of the doubt.

"But what did you actually do?" insisted the frog.

Then Till Orangespiegel enjoyed an orgy of confession—which turned out sounding curiously like boasting. Everything seemed now lost in any case. He might as well try to clear his conscience.

"Well, you see," said the O.P., as the others moved toward the plank wagon, then threw down the mattress under a palm and got comfortable to listen to a story, "I manufactured a set of mirrors. In an old book, acquired, actually, from our friend Lev

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here years ago, I had come across a recipe for magicifying glass. I knew already from a lifelong study of looking glasses how they will *almost* exactly reflect the qualities of one another. I reasoned that if I could make one magic mirror, be it never so small, I could increase its range enormously by a simple process of multiple reflection.

“Then the great idea was born. All my life—since moving to Oz—I had been bothered by the fact that of the six rainbow colors all were represented in the warp and woof of the enchanted country save only the very color of the sun—and of those little suns, the fruit called oranges. Devoted as I was, virtually from birth, to the color, I determined to do something about it. What a coup if I could bewitch all Oz to be orange!

“I will not weary you with a technical account. My encyclopedias and books of cabals described the method to be followed exactly. There seemed no way anything could go wrong—”

“Oh, come, sir!” cried the Frogman, going to be disappointed. “A *little* technical description I’m sure we can all put up with. What *was* your method?”

The Owl Practitioner appeared not to sit quite comfortably on the lumpy torn old mattress. He reached behind him and seemed to do some rearranging of the lumps where he sat propped against the sloping bole of the coconut tree. Then he resumed, “Well, if you *will* know...: I possessed some odd items of magic already. I never properly went in for the art but the occasional object with magical properties would come my way in the course of my wide-ranging studies and dealings in physics and optics.

Now that I found such were of the essence I ordered up further charms from my friend Oy—who also was wanted to play another role in my scheme...”

Levimeyerabloch fumed again to think he had been cold-bloodedly summoned across half Oz to “play roles” in a “scheme”. But Orangespiegel went unperturbably on, pausing occasionally to ruffle his feathered /81 head or blink his owlish eyes. “I turned over the whole of my glass manufactory which

normally was kept busy with the production of mirrors for side-shows and conference halls—to the preparation of three looking glasses of the very finest quality.

“One was the great rectangular installation which some of you have glimpsed in its bed at the edge of the then Quadling country—”

“‘Then!’” quoth the Frogman in some consternation.

“Why, yes,” replied the O.P. smoothly, “the Quadling land of Oz is by definition red in color”—he made a moue of distaste—“but my mirror lies now in a region of the true hue. I think it may be assumed it no longer forms a part of Quadlinga, and indeed may be thought of as an independent realm—”

“With you as king, I suppose,” put in Levimeyerabloch acidly.

“If I should be?! I’d rather be a peddler!—Oh, sorry, old thing. But nay, far be it from my heart, the thought thereof.”

But just the same, they all thought he protested a bit too much and withal too Shakespeareanly.

The Frogman was more interested in physics than in power politics and went on to insist that they be told the purpose of the giant mirror.

“The rays of the evening sun,” complied Orangespiegel, “at the autumnal equinox—that was yesterday—striking through my great pane of orange-tinted glass, fall at a certain hour exactly athwart the vast oblong of the ground-based mirror. Then, if another mirror, keyed to the greater one, were hung in space, and the whole activated by yet a third—magic—mirror, why, then I calculated the color of the great earth mirror would leap into space, whence the satellite glass would reflect it back over the whole land—like a color transparency—and the magic would fix it there.

“At least, that’s what the handbooks declared...”

The Owl Practitioner ended a little anticlimactically his tale of grandiose dreams that had ultimately got nowhere.

“And then?” pursued the eager Frogman. He had suffered enough in the desert, not to mention at the mouths of the mouth

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spiders, not to be going to get his money's worth of what he had come after. "How did you get the middle mirror into space?"

"Well, that required a bit of subterfuge," confessed the orange ne'er-do-well. "I knew my neighbors, the Lords of Light, had the only satellite launcher in the vicinity. I happened to know they were to be from home yesterday. In fact, I arranged it myself. I caused a fabricated message to be delivered to them, one purporting to come from their—daughter—that's Lucinda Wammuppirovocuck - calling for the attendance of the whole crew of them. I think I fantasized a wedding in which the grandson Zippiochoggolak would be the principal figure..." The O.P. trailed off, seemingly gloating over the success of his prank.

"Anyway," he soon resumed, "I loaded up the would-be satellite mirror and brought it—and us all—to the Castle of Light, where it was a simple matter to launch it into orbit by the use of the Lords' equipment." There he stopped.

"And the magic mirror'?" prompted the frog, "the crux of your whole plan?"

"There too I intended to make use of the Lords. I knew they possessed a more powerful blow-lamp than I happened to have on hand. The process of glass-magicization requires a moment of intense heat applied to the glass and the magic ingredients simultaneously. Master Bright here can tell you how that proceeded—"

Master Bright could but as usual didn't.

"The whole thing went off like a charm - which of course it was." The Owl Practitioner glowed with quiet satisfaction at the recollection. "And then it screwed up!" he wailed—and could not be comforted. "What went wrong?! I did everything by the book, to the minutest detail! How *could* it go wrong?"

He moaned for a while - and then he renewed his quarrel with Levimeyerabloch. "It was this idiot here! It *must* have been! Waving the mirror about in that frantic fashions! I fear I didn't catch him in time. He broke the steady play of the glasses upon each other. He must have set up some kind of oscillation that ultimately undid the whole process—"

“Mr. Oy—Lev—oh, sorry; I’ m confused by the wealth of names—” said the Frogman. “Levimeyerabloch, son of Ritzeplummereczech,” quoth the peddler, smarting under the uncivil O.P’ s attack but feeling still very cordial toward the courteous frog. “For reasons I shouldn’t be knowing, called ‘Oy’ by mine genial host,” he ended, with an indignant glance at Till.

“Thank you,” responded the frog with old-world etiquette. Then again to Orangespiegel; “Mr. Levimeyerabloch was set to tend the magic mirror Wasn’t that a very weak link in your chain of command? I mean; it’s quite understandable; he didn’t—by your leave, Mr. Lev—know what he was doing—as I can gather...?”

“No more he did!” raved the incensed O.P. “But it had to be so. That was one of the essentials of the formula as given in my encyclopedia!... Wait!” He fumbled in a pocket. “I have it here about me. I copied down the recipe - for ready reference while at work at the castle.”

He drew forth a crumpled piece of paper: his check list of not-to-be-forgottens, across the top of which was scrawled: “Successive reflections in all three mirrors will change all the angles made by O.P. with the normals Ox, Oy, Oz into their supplements^s.”

§ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. 15, page 569 which was repeating the formula as still operative as late as 1969. Editor’s note.

C H A P T E R

F I F T E E N

“Good gracious me,” cried the pretty Princess Regnant of Oz the next morning, stepping into the orangery. This was a triangular apartment on the ground floor in the southwest corner of the Palace of Magic in the Emerald City. “Whatever’s this?”

Ozma had felt like a grapefruit that morning (though scarcely round enough! and by no means so acid) and had stopped off to pluck a few from her potted citrus trees to carry along to the breakfast room. She would, however, be hard put to it now to select any such fruit, at least by color for every grapefruit in the room, as well as every lemon, citron, tangerine, satsuma, pomelo, kumquat, shaddock, calemondin, lime, and tangelo was a bright orange.

“More mysteries!” she murmured to herself and paused for a long—and not wholly displeased—gaze round before going to summon assistance.

It might just be mentioned here that Oz the Wizard when designing a suitable (and symmetrical) Ruler’s Palace for the magical country had harked to that country’s shape and color scheme for his inspiration. The Palace was oblong, lying along an east-west axis, and the rooms in the various parts were decorated in the leit-farbe of the directionally corresponding region

of Oz, with the emerald-green throne room in the center. Until today the ceiling and floor of the orangery had always been yellow — with pink polka dots.

“Heavings!” cried the Wizard jocularly when he had come and seen the extent of the mischief. “I should say the room’s under some kind of enchantment. That is: no one sent out in the night for decorators, did they, Ozma?”

“Even if they had, they would scarcely have painted the fruit,” rejoined the ruler in an equally light tone.

“They painted the roses in *Alice*,” reminded Trot, who had run from the breakfast room with her napkin still in her collar.

“That’s so,” agreed Ozma. “But Wonderland keeps being different from Oz, doesn’t it?”

“You’ve checked the rooms alongside, Your highness?” wondered the Wizard.

“Quite. Everything normal.”

“I still think you ought to go consult Sorceress Glinda,” chimed in young Dorothy. “She’ll know what’s at the bottom of all these mysterious phenomena. She’s only to read in the Great Book.”

“Which I dare say “ put in the Wizard that sorceress’ (*very* friendly) rival, “she’s already done. If anything’s gravely amiss we’re sure to hear from her.” The wonder-worker still tended to view the unexpected orangeness of a single room as a somewhat laughing matter certainly so in comparison with the general reversal of directions that had exercised all of them yesterday and the evening before.

Queen Ozma was inclined to agree with him—until the observant Princess Betsy, glancing out a southwest window, threw them all into a commotion with her announcement:

“It’s not just this room, Ozma. look there!” From under the tall orangehouse windows a broad band of total orangeness stretched away across lawn and garden and park, over the park walls and the streets of the Emerald City, and far far away, could they have but known it, to a certain arrangement of vertical and horizontal glasses on the edge of the Deadly Desert. Within that

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zone everything was oranger than objects in the Emerald City normally were green.

“Oh, my word, what a sight!” cried the fairy ruler and clapped her hands. “Isn’t it wonderful just there where the green *meets* the orange?! I love that combination.”

Ozma was not employing the grave tone Princess Dorothy would have considered suitable and she chided her chum gently, if only by implication, when she said, “Now I really do think we—that is, you—ought to go confer with Glinda.”

The queen gave a faint sigh. “Very well, my dears. I’ll just finish my grapefruit. Then we’ll go to determine who they shall be that straight shall post to Glinda... But “—a sudden thought struck her: “how shall we get there?! Lignum’s gone off gallivanting with the Woozy! There’s no one to draw the red wagon—”

“Your grace!” broke in the Wizard, who had turned for a last puzzled look out the orange window. “All in good time here comes the sweating horse—”

I doubt that any sweat was coming from the speeding log horse but certainly gravel was flying from his twinkling hoofs as he turned in through the park gate and rushed headlong toward the terrace before the palace. In moments they could all hear a drumming, even at that distance, on the front door and the crowd in the orangery sped off to welcome home the errant Sawhorse.

The Soldier with the Green Whiskers had already done the honors at the door as they arrived. “My dear friend!” cried Princess Ozma and impulsively stooped to throw her arms about the neck of her own wooden creation. “Where have you been?!” she wondered, while the others chimed in with marveling comments on the aptness of the Sawhorse’s coming.

“Oh, Your highness!” gasped the wooden animal—and then, as so often, was at a loss for words.

“Yes, dear Lignum? Go on,” urged the Ruler kindly, as everyone waited, stilt, to hear the news.

But it was no good. The Sawhorse couldn’t say a word.

Finally Ozma had to go with him out to the stables and there, when the faithful creature had calmed down, the fairy princess got the whole story from him.

She returned after forty-five minutes to the Small Presence Chamber where, by common consent, the others had waited. Her eyes were dark with tragedy. "Oh, my dears," she spoke in thrilling accents, "I'm afraid matters have taken a very bad turn indeed!"

C H A P T E R

S I X T E E N

“Fascinating!” breathed Glinda the Good, right royal Sorceress and Good Witch of the South, as she read of things she had never believed possible. She was all alone in the immense book-lined library and study of her pink palace on the outskirts of the Ruby City, capital of the Quadling country of Oz, and it was midnight. She sat on a high stool before the heavy old lectern upon which was chained with links of silver, bronze, and platinum the ancient Book of Records, which contained a succinct account of virtually everything that happened in Oz since the year One, O.Z.—as well as a digest of important foreign news. (Naturally the Book had not the space—nor the patience—to record every time in Oz that a farmer went out to milk the cows.)

Glinda read on with bated breath: “Thereupon peddler, frog, woozy, and boy departed for Pink Palace...”

“Oh, good,” the witch said to herself with satisfaction; “they’ll be here directly then.” She knew of old the swiftness of the cheetah. She rang through on the intercom to the gatehouse at the entrance to the grounds. “Hello, Jinjur? Glinda here. Say, is Minute Maid there? I heard you girls were having a pyjama party... Right. Will you send her right over?—Yes, just tell her to brew up a heaping jug of Skim and bring it to the library. Oh,

and a plate of bagels wouldn't hurt... Yes, thanks. I've taken a few tucks under the arm-holes. I think it'll do very well now... Oh, and, Jinjur, there'll be a buggy arriving — at the latest, before dawn, I should judge. It's my friend Levimeyerabloch and party. Just send them on through, okay?"

The Sorceress rang off and jotted on a memo pad; "also flies bees —"

"'Boy'," she murmured; "that'll be Button Bright," and she added "ice cream, popcorn" to the list.

She sat musing a moment. A likely youth. She herself liked non-gabbiness in a person. There was something quirky, off-beat — and attractive! there. But what the heck! the kid was only ten years old — and, if he were to stay on in Oz, unlikely ever to get any older. Besides, he hadn't addressed word one to herself on his recent visit. She dismissed the topic from her mind.

The sorceress leaned back for just a moment on her (after all high-backed) stool — and fell into a light doze, to be wakened in a quarter of an hour by a discreet tap at the door. "Oh, fine, she said, stifling a wee yawn. "Just put it there, will you?" She handed the girl in gingham dress and apron the supplementary list. "And when those people arrive, also these things, all right?"

'Fancy that,' mused the witch when alone again. 'So the old rascal brought off something after all with his mirrors. But what a funny way to behave in the end! I wonder how that will sort itself out... I must tell Ozma... I must tell... the Queen...' Soon she was dozing again.

The ersatz in its thermos was still piping hot, however, when she was awakened definitively an hour later by the arrival of the bedraggled crew from points west.

"Come in, do!" welcomed the gracious sorceress. "Or no! I tell you what, let's go along to the morning room on the work-room staircase. You'll be more comfortable there. Here you'd have to sit on stacks of books."

So saying, she herself took up the refreshment tray and held the door open with her foot as the others passed out again.

"Hi, Queen," said Button Bright as he went.

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Glinda gave an amused chuckle. "I'm not a queen, my lad. Oh, I know," she explained, as they passed along the corridor. "I live amidst the panoply of royalty—and, indeed, am said to be of partly royal birth" (she knew very well she was). "Also I am ruler of the Quadlings—but *not* their Queen."

"You should be," stated the boy.

Glinda raised her eyebrows—in delight, let it be noted.

In moments they were all comfortably ensconced in easy chairs and the Skim was going round. "Now, please, Lev," entreated the witch, "let me hear the news! I've been keeping up, of course, via the Great Book—but I want to get the personal angle."

"Easy it hasn't been, your grace," admitted the peddler and munched a bagel ravenously. In a space between bites he added, "Such usage I haven't been used to. Look there," and he put down his bun to pull back the sleeve of his caftan and reveal serious black and blue marks. "And here! feel that." He proffered the side of his head, where a large lump protruded among the curls. "A wooden shoe brought that—with a foot in it!"

"Gracious," said Glinda, "I didn't realize there'd been fisticuffs. The Book just said 'dispute'."

"Dispute there was! and then some. But, the worst of it is; I got my clouts to no purpose. They got away!"

"That would be..?"

"Till Orangespiegel, the villainous 'Owl Practitioner', and the woman Cayke—"

"But was she—!?"

"Oh, I have no beef against the Yip woman. Seemed a decent soul, she did. But for her, however—"

"Well, I am agog, Lev," declared Glinda the Good, pleasurablely excited to hear all the gossip, despite the fullness of her existing acquaintance with affairs. But the Record Book was so succinct and matter-of-fact! "Could we have the whole story?" the witch went on, "—from the time you left here before?"

So the merchant collected his heads of discourse and told the tale.

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“I see,” said the fascinated Frogman. “‘OP’ is yourself and of course it was you who set up the angles of reflection. But ‘normals’: what are they?”

“Just what the word signifies—I presume!” huffed Till Orangespiegel, who appeared to have turned out a more superficial student than he liked to think. “The ox at the great ground mirror—actually, I had two hundred of them, for good measure—was normal enough in every way. And then Oz, represented by the oblong middle mirror, remained as normal as blueberry pie - or as normal as a thoroughly magic land can be—until the very instant when I myself denormalized it. But ‘Oy’!—I realize now *he’s* never been normal in his life, I dare say!!”

Here the Owl Practitioner jumped to his feet and shocked everyone by heaping the most outrageous abuse on the head of the poor unoffending peddler Levimeyerabloch!

They were all too startled by the gross impropriety to speak—all but the mettlesome merchant himself, who put his hands on his hips and laughed the furious orangeman to scorn. ‘Oy, Gewalt!’ he cried with spirit. “Freely translated, that’s ‘Give me strength!’—to resist pounding this pitiful pile of puckered putridity into the ground! ‘Oy’, indeed! My name’s never been ‘Oy’—and I have been grossly hoodwinked and manipulated

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and my confidence violently abused. This creature hasn't a leg to /93 stand on in defense of his treatment of me—or all of us! as far afield as the great Glinda herself, who likewise was conned—into supplying the oxen!"

Lev was working himself up into a nice little passion of his own and it was only with the greatest difficulty that the others managed to separate the two combatants. The Frogman, followed by his companion the cookie cook, drew the fuming Orangespiegel off among the orange trees to the south, while Lev and his associates Button Bright and the animals retired out of sight to the north

and tried to decide what to do next. The camels remained impassively where they were, cropping the short desert grass.

"Boy, oh boy! the noive of that joik!" raved Levimeyerabloch. "He ought to be taken into custody. Wait 'til her highness Ozma hears about this. Would you believe it?: he was going to refinish her whole country in a different color! without a syllable of warning. Were it not by great preservation we'd *all* be orangemen today. Even so the damage is bad enough." Here the peddler rubbed vigorously the bole of the last orange palm they passed and was rewarded by being able to show a fine orange powder on his own palm.

"See there? It's deep-dyed through and through—and I don't see how it will ever be put right. Oh, Ozma will be furious!"

The rest all looked glum at the prospect but no one had any helpful suggestions to make.

Meanwhile Till Orangespiegel was excitedly justifying himself to the Frogman—while Cayke sat on the ground in her serape and gazed off wistfully across the desert.

"Hm, yes, I see," replied the frog, trying to be sympathetic when appealed to as confidant, but shocked as everyone had been at the O.P.'s bad behavior. His curiosity was by now to some extent slaked and he was wondering what was going to happen next. The Owl Practitioner's machinations had after all been brought to nought—except for a certain orangeness of the immediately surrounding countryside, which after all struck the

frog as not unattractive. Maybe they should just all go home.

Alas, it wasn't going to be that easy. Till was off on a new tack. "I'm not beaten yet!" he boasted in the midst of diatribes. "There's more than one string to my bow! I'll go back to the spherodome. There I'll think of some way to get it all back. After all, tomorrow is another day!"

So saying, he abruptly left his companions and ran to the dray, between whose shafts the two patient oxen waited. Without ceremony Orangespiegel gathered up the awkward loose-flopping mattress from under the palm and fumbled it approximately back into the rear of the wagon. Then he mounted to the driver's seat.

But his adversary, the peddler, was off on a tack of *his* own. At this moment he came running from among the trees to the north and shouted, "Oy, you there! Where's that magic mirror! Give it here to me! I'm taking it to the Queen. We've had enough of your magic muddling!"

This was too much for the incensed orangeman, who stood up with the reins in his hands and yelled, "Stop where you are! I declare you all my prisoners! Mr. Fruakx!" he called to the Frogman, who had followed after to the scene of hubbub, "be so good as to tromp on that peddler. And you, madam—" this to the cookie cook "will you kindly take in hand that boy there?! We're off back to my place—where I shall settle your various hashes as I see fit!"

No one was in a hurry to act on these injunctions. No one except the quiet Sawhorse, who, when he heard the word "prisoners", bolted incontinently. He could never stand being in thrall, unless it be to his kind mistress, the Queen of Oz, who—it was high time—ought to be informed of what mischief was afoot in this corner of her land. The others saw him no more.

Levimeyerabloch was standing with his hands on his hips, looking up at the furious Orangespiegel and taunting him with jibes and laughter. "You! take us as prisoners!? How? I'd like to know. You're an incompetent, a mere dialectician; you couldn't take a fly prisoner!—"

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Actually Lev was treading on problematical ground here. Who knew what the O.P. might not be able to accomplish by means of the magic mirror, which after all he still possessed? But the peddler had a shrewd suspicion that the power of the mirror, though there it might be very great, was limited to its effect upon other mirrors.

But his thrusts had told. With a flying leap of rage the Owl Practitioner launched himself from the high cart seat, wooden clogs first, upon the head of the peddler and the two went down in a swirl of dust and a writhe of warlike arms and legs.

The others all came running and gathered in a ring to watch the fun. None of them took any part but they did tend to hope the peddler would win. Thus when presently Lev cried, "Quick! Throw me a rope!", they were not tardy in complying.

Actually a rope might be an unlikely thing to call for in a coconut grove removed from any human habitation, but no doubt the merchant was thinking of the one he'd seen looped around the shoulder of the Frogman. Nor was that rope slow in being applied to Till Orangespiegel, to the accompaniment of his screams and imprecations, by Button Bright and the Frogman while Levimeyerabloch held him down and the Woozy sat foursquare on his head.

After that little remained to be done but to tie the bundle of Till on the back of the dromedary (that of the Bactrian camel was already designated, by tradition, Cayke's riding place) and set off for Glinda's palace as the first and nearest court of justice that came to mind.

It was pleasant to rest at the end of the day but after an hour or two they wondered how restful it could get! The oxen, assisted now only, turn and turn about, by the cheetah and the Woozy, made slower work of hauling the plank wagon than ever before. A steady diet of coconuts was making its inroads as well on the strength and spirits of the wayfarers. Immediately after dark they stopped for the night.

When Levimeyerabloch, resting but uneasily, what with his bruises, wakened shortly after midnight, the cookie cook and

the trussed Till Orangespiegel, together with their attendant beasts of burden, were nowhere to be seen.

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

“Goodness me,” said the Sorceress of the South, dismayed. “I guess I fell asleep before I read that far...”

“You’ve no idea where they went?”

“I’m perfectly certain of where, your grace,” the Frogman put in his word, “though Mr. Lev, I’m afraid, doesn’t seem quite convinced.”

“And where might that be?” enquired Glinda on cue.

“Into the desert!” The Frogman paused dramatically.

“You astonish me.”

“Yes. You see, poor Cayke had been broody ever since she met that brigand who kidnapped us - kindly, I may say. I think she just up and left in the night, heading back to find the fellow again...!”

“But,” protested Levimeyerabloch, “the mad Practitioner! why take him along? That’s where your theory falls down. He was nothing to her. Why, did they exchange two words yet?!”

“That,” confessed the frog, “I haven’t been able to account for—”

“Now *my* theory,” broke in the merchant again, “is that the devilish O.P., resorting perhaps to magic, broke his bonds, took the woman as hostage, and made off—but obviously not out into the Deadly Desert.”

“No,” declared the Frogman. “Impossible.” The rope itself is magic. I know to my cost. It can never be undone by the bound individual himself—only by another—”

“He talked the woman into releasing him!” proposed Lev.

“Oh, no, Cayke was sleeping near me - as her natural protector,” explained Mr. Fruakx. “Any such conversation as you posit I could not have helped but be wakened by. No, whatever happened took place with the utmost stealth, and no chit-chat.”

The Woozy put in a word for once. “Mistress Glinda,” he said, “would the Great Book tell?”

“Well thought upon!” praised the witch. “It would—but fairly frustratingly, I fear. You see, the Book of Records tells *everything*, but terribly boiled down. And it only tells what, never why or how.”

Still, they all agreed it would be as well to know whatever the Book *might* tell. Glinda rang for Minute Maid to clear away the breakfast things and they all returned to the library. “Furthermore,” went on the sorceress as they walked, “if the errant pair have gone into the desert, the book will have nothing further to say. News from beyond the borders of Oz is only recorded in very broad outline - in a single daily digest.”

Never mind. They took a look and there was something. “Cayke L. Baque and Till Orangespiegel departed for desert” was the terse report.

“How right you were, Mr. Fruakx,” constated the Good Witch. “And how strange. I would give a lot to know under what circumstances they ‘departed for desert’. But for the time being I fear we’re not to know. “But now, my friends; what next? I’ll keep a watching brief on the doings of those two. I’ll be in immediate touch with the queen when—and if—they return to Oz. But until they do—or, I should say, he does—it doesn’t seem there is much worry about. The front-to-backness of Oz appears to have been a thing of but a moment. The practitioner’s manœuvre simply misfired. And from all you say he himself didn’t know how to put it right - that is to say, *wrong*—again. In any case none of us here in Oz has any jurisdiction beyond the

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borders of Ozma's realm."

It was all rather unsatisfactory. The Frogman had grave compunctions about leaving his erstwhile traveling companion thus to her fate, even if it was a fate she'd chosen. Levimeyerabloch was still smarting at the thought of the bad treatment he had received at the hands of the Owl Practitioner. Revenge he did not particularly desire but he felt distinctly uneasy so long as the magic mirror remained in the hands of one who could be counted on to use it for mischief. The Woozy felt like a flat tire since he'd been so unceremoniously deserted by his sidekick the Sawhorse. He knew his friend had not funk'd it but only gone to summon aid. He supposed he'd better be trotting home again to the Emerald City to let them all know that most of the former party were safe and well. And Button Bright? That boy rarely had a motive that was discernible but he did occasionally have a thought. He said, "What about the orangeness?"

"Good lad," praised his admirer, the Sorceress of the South. "I must radio to Ozma about that—as well as a number of other items I've no doubt she's concerned about. Want to hear what she has to say?"

That pleased the youth. He was a normal boy in some ways and took an interest in mechanical things. He'd heard a good deal about wireless communication during his sojourns in the great world but had not so far seen it in action.

"If she's like me," said Glinda as she oscillated her crystals, zeroing in on the queen's call letters ECOZ, "she may be prepared to leave well enough alone. I don't mind if a slice of my domain is orange instead of red... Hello, Princess Ozma there? Glinda speaking... Oh, good!" In an aside to the group around her transmitter stand: "The Sawhorse has just arrived there." Then, "Not to worry!.. Yes, that's quite true—but our friends are all safe." Here she named them. "Only Madam Cayke has returned—of her own choice, it seems - to the desert, and the fellow that was responsible for all the odd phenomena has gone with her... No, we *think* he's lost control of the satellite and we shouldn't be feeling any further effects of it. But in any case

there's little we can do as long as he stays out of Oz. What I'm mainly calling about, though; it seems the Orangespiegel character did succeed in turning a strip of our Oz territory orange in color. Oh, you did? I see. Oh, well, that's all right then. No, I don't see that it matters greatly... *Do you?!* Well, that's jolly. So we'll leave it that way for the time being...?.. Yes, I think they'll be leaving shortly. Yes, the lot. They have a nice day for the journey..."

Then she signed off. "Ozma's longing to talk to all of you in detail, so I didn't like to say your departure would be delayed. But you must be exhausted! Wouldn't you rather wait and go on tomorrow?"

The party, thinking of their duty to their queen, demurred.

"But one thing I can guess you'd all like now," insisted their thoughtful hostess. "A hot bath!"

The wayfarers agreed that such would be far from amiss. After the alarming discovery of the disappearance of their prisoner (and others) the party had broken camp in the middle of the night and posted on with all possible haste, stopping at the Orangespiegel residence only five minutes to switch vehicles. With what rough kindness they could muster they broke the news to the hospitable Mistress Pill that her brother would in all likelihood never return to taste the caneton. Then they raced on at the top of the cheetah's speed, to draw up in the pre-dawn before the southern sorceress' palace more dusty and disheveled than ever. Yes, a bath would feel good.

Afterwards Glinda came out to the porte-cochère to wave them off. "Let's hope we've heard the last of that nine hours' wonder" (it hadn't been much longer than that), said the red witch. "And I hope you'll all come soon again for a visit under more harmonious auspices!"