

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

They sojourned in the desert for six years. That was chicken-feed compared to the Israelites, who spent seven times that long in the wilderness, but Cayke and Till thought it was enough to be going on with. Yes, they were "Cayke" and "Till" to each other before many days had passed.

The way of their society was thus. Cayke woke in the tamarind thicket from a splendid dream in which she was being ravished (in sense two of the dictionary by the Bedouin with Bright Eyes. She knew then which way her destiny lay, that whatever was to be his fate hers must be also.

Silently she gathered her serape about her and crept away on hands and knees out of range of hearing of the sleeping Frogman and the others. The breeze that rattled the fronds of the swordbushes was her ally here. Then she rose to her feet and sped on, making straight south for the desert. It happened that her way thither led past the trees under which the party had enjoined the camels to remain, well out of hearing for themselves of the lewd complaints of the bound and helpless Orangespiegel.

When the Bactrian camel, who had grown quite fond of the mild and uncomplaining cookie cook, saw her erstwhile passenger hurrying away, she rose and sauntered after her. That

was the signal for the dromedary as well, indifferent to his load, to follow after, for where his cobber went he naturally went too.

Cayke took no notice but pressed on the mile to the desert rim. There, like Marlene some years later, she kicked off her shoes and proceeded to follow her man into the sandy waste. The going soon proved excessively difficult. The cook was protected in her robe from all physical discomfort but oh! how she slipped and skidded and sank past her ankles in the sand.

What one wouldn't give for a camel at this juncture. And lo! there was one, just five paces behind, placidly chewing a bit of old cud and stepping daintily across the moon-white wasteland. Cayke didn't wait to let herself be talked into it but went back to the camel, hauled herself up by the muzzle cord as she had been taught to do, and lodged herself between the humps. Then they went on.

By next nightfall the party had regained the oasis of a'l Wadr Uqqi where the camels had been first encountered. There they passed the dark hours. Humanitarian considerations had forced Cayke early on to remove the gag that partly inhibited Orangespiegel's speech. She gave him to drink of the canteen, then had to put up with his furious and now unimpeded squawks the rest of the day, a thing which wasn't very pleasant.

Regret for her altruism made her decline to untie the former O.P. when he begged for it. Her only concession was now and then to go to him and stuff his open mouth with tropical fruit. Otherwise she just sat under a palm and fanned herself as the cool of evening came on and listened to the distant rhythm of a flute and drums. Then she gathered her serape about her and slept to dream.

Till spent the night among the camels. The two animals of our story went to join their former companions at the corral, who when they saw them approaching chewed more vigorously in sign of recognition. For a bit the orangeman harangued the herd but when he realized he was getting no change he gave over.

Next morning the cookie cook was out and about early, mak-

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ing enquiries of all the desert urchins and their mothers as to who and where her lover might be. Fortunately—and no little surprisingly - everyone in Oz, in the surrounding, desert, and on all the rest of the continent spoke English. (It's always tiresome for a story teller to have to make allowances for the fact that very likely a portion of his characters don't understand a word of what other portions are saying.)

No one, alas, was able to tell her a thing. Oh, yes, some of the urchins had witnessed the unceremonious deposition there some days earlier of the cook and her companion, but nobody had recognized the band of outlaws who brought them. There were so many such bands operating in the desert you couldn't hope to keep up with them all. She did learn where the next oasis lay, however, and determined to try her luck there. It was stated to be further west-southwest and that suited her book very well.

During the long hours on camelback Cayke had had time for a good deal of reflection. Her thoughts of her love occupied an hour or two. But there she had so little to go on! Soon she found herself merely rethinking thoughts she had had before. She moved on to consideration of her willy-nilly companion. Heaven knew she would never have chosen to travel with the fellow! But now that she had him she wondered how she might best behave.

The idea of untying him and letting him loose in the dismal and dangerous desert did not please her essentially kindly soul. He would have to go on with her for a while until they reached a place where he might obtain the essentials for continuing to survive. Then, by the time they did reach such a place she had had time to think further. She realized she could best please her friends, whose abandonment even now was troubling her conscience quite a bit, by keeping the ex-Owl Practitioner out of their hair for as long as possible.

As she prepared to leave a'l Wadr Uqqi she asked the orangeman what his plans were. "The camels probably won't separate, you see, and I'll be wanting mine to travel on with."

"Plans?" shrieked the unregenerate Till. "Of course I plan to

return to my orange kingdom—" it had got that far in his fantasies — "there to make a crown - and wear it! One day all Oz will be orange - and mine!"

"Oh," said the cook. "Well, then you'd better stay where you are." She stopped his mouth with dates and left the oasis, the camels in tow.

Three months later they were not much forwarder. Cayke had heard rumors of a raid on a desert city far away and was convinced her idol had played some role there, either as vandal or hero. She made for Fuz but when she arrived found all peaceful and the descent by brigands almost forgotten. As for Till, on a promise of good conduct he had been untied and allowed a certain leeway, provided he did not attempt to make off. By now they were so far away across desert wastes from Oz that the cookie cook thought she had little to fear from a decamping by the orangeman.

She had found out, by trial and error, the characteristics of the Frogman's magic rope. It could be fitted to—and removed from - a candidate for binding with a flick of the wrist and might easily be removed by anyone *except* the person bound. The threat of a reapplication of the rope to himself kept erring Till in hand. When not using it, Cayke kept the cord in her saddlebag and woe betide any thief who might attempt to take it from her steed. The weight of two camels would be more than anyone could bear.

Still, the clever ex-O.P. might have outwitted the cook in time and used her own rope against her but for the cleverness of that same cook. Not in the way you think, however! It was Cayke's cleverness with a cookie sheet that brought about her downfall, but also wrote 'finis' to the grandiose plans of Orangespiegel. Her cleverness and her sense of fair play. Those can be dangerous qualities in the wrong hands!

It was Cayke's sense of fair play, her altruism, her generosity, her self-respect—or whatever we call that troublesome quality that makes us all insist on giving in return for what we get. The quality caused her to offer her services as baker in

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exchange for her food in the places where she turned up. Of course once those services were accepted her fame as a cook spread and it was not many years before the rumor reached the court - if 'court' it could be called; certainly it was a base court— of the dread Dewan of the Deadly Desert.

The Dewan never got anything fit to eat. Like many of those who dwelt in the desert he mostly subsisted on dates. There wasn't much you could do to those on the way from tree to mouth to spoil them. Roll them in the dirt a bit, and of course they did that. But otherwise ...? So he was constantly alert to tales of anything good to eat and when he heard that a masterless master chef was abroad in his dewanity he sent for her.

'Sent for' to the Dewan meant to order out his light brigade, which flew, all eighteen strong (it was a *very* light brigade), on wings of song ("The Riff") to Maqq Abr, the dry-gulch village where Cayke at that period was reinforcing her culinary celebrity with her peppermint hermits, her coalhouse cookies, and her "desert rocks", a new item in her repertoire, devised in response to local conditions and ingredients. You'll want to try them. Here's the recipe;

Blend one cup of flour, one teaspoon of baking powder and a quarter teaspoon of salt. Cut in half a cup of fat until particles are pea-sized. Stir in a cup of finely chopped nuts, a cup of shredded coconut, half a packed cup of chopped dates, half a cup of raisins, and an egg. Blend well and chill for an hour. Place one-inch balls half an inch apart on a greased cookie sheet and flatten slightly. Bake about fifteen minutes in an oven preheated to 350°F. (175°C .) until golden brown.

"Taste one, do," urged Cayke when the brigade swept up to her tent kitchen that afternoon. Then she saw which were the bright eyes that regarded her from under a black-and-beige tarboosh and she fainted incontinently away.

When she awoke she was in the arms of her lover and he was on the back of a fleet desert pony, which however controlled its fleetness to where Cayke's two camels could keep up with the rollicking desert band. Till Orangespiegel was somewhere

in the train. The brigade hadn't cared about kidnapping him but had been urged to do so by the grateful inhabitants of Maqq Abr.

Talk between the brigadier and his captive was slight. When evening came he deposited her gently but firmly under an oleander and brought her rose water in a copper bowl. "Here's a loaf of bread," he said, dropping down beside her on the spread carpet. "Wine there, if you fancy it. Oh, and here's a book of verses. I haven't much conversation But I can sing to you." And he did; "The Desert Song". The wilderness was paradise—and how!

Before dawn they started on again. Late that night they arrived in the capital—if you could so designate it—of His Dread Dewanity. The Dewan had cleaned up his act a little, perforce, since the flying visit of Princess Ozma to his serai^s but it was still pretty much of a dump. Cayke wrung her hand when she saw the mess hall (which was rightly named).

She never saw her love again—or if she did it was in the sequel. He had done his duty when he delivered the captive to his overlord—but he had done it with kindness, even, briefly, to the last full measure of devotion. Cayke knew she would live on it the rest of her life.

That life settled into a routine in the palace kitchens. Cayke had done wandering. She was most likely to see her idol again by remaining where she was, not by continuing to scour the desert. She baked from dawn to dark and to some extent enjoyed what she was doing. For some time she was preoccupied with introducing standards of cleanliness in the cooking quarters. Sometimes she would catch herself humming the airs from *The Desert Song*.

What of Till Orangespiegel? Oh, he was flung without benefit of clergy into a cell, in fact the one occupied on another occasion by the Woozy and Scraps the Patchwork Girl. In that modest setting he arrived, in time, at two of the most far-reaching motives of his life.

§ See, once more, *In Other Lands Than Oz*. Editor's note.

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The second of these grew out of the first. The first motive was a tender regard for the cookie cook. Orangespiegel was treated with well-deserved and extensive cruelty by his jailers. They did not especially hate him nor were they exceptionally bad men. They just had their role to play in the cosmic scheme of things. That role was to soften up the vain headstrong schemer by their harshness so that he would have a change of heart. But the change of heart might not have come about if Orangespiegel had not begun to care about Cayke.

She came every day to the street window of Till's cell and pushed under the bars a tray of the day's broken cookie remains. Across the orangeman's life at this time brushed just one soft silken garment and it was the skirts of the cookie cook's Mother-Hubbard. He early learned to look forward to her cool compassionate visits with frantic longing. He found the woman's charms were beginning to ravish him (in sense three of the dictionary).

Cayke felt nothing; she was just being kind. But one day, when they had been at Far-Es-Ukaam almost four years, she had an additional kindly thought. She sought, and was granted, permission to enter the prisoner's cell, whereupon they had this conversation:

Cayke: I hate to see you eating your heart out with hatred.

Till: What would have have me do, woman? To pray for them that have done scath to me?

Cayke: Do not be sarcastic. Instead of plotting to undertake the death of all the world, use your gifts to plan constructive action that will merit you the plaudits of the crowd. (She had chosen to use strangely stilted language as being more formal and hence perhaps more persuasive.)

Till: What might that action be, pray tell?

Cayke: How to make points with Princess Ozma and the powers that be in Oz—who after all never did you any harm—when, as we surely shall, one day we are freed to return to our homeland.

Till: I'll think about it. For your sake only, mind!

It was enough. Just for laughs he tried what it might give to

forget all his thwarted ambitions and well-earned defeats and to think creatively about his problems.

It worked! The first thing he did was that, no matter how he'd like to detest it, he thought with 'love' about the critique of his 'enemy' Levimeyerabloch of his, Till's, procedure with the magic mirrors. 'Let's see now,' he said to himself as he sat on his pile of shavings in the corner of the cell and munched the remains of gingersnaps and macaroons. 'I do remember me, the miserable - no, the dear, sweet - peddler told me I was a dialectician, no proper magician. I wonder what he meant by that.'

The ex-O.P. knew well enough what was meant. He just didn't like to admit it to himself. He had completely misread the formulae in his encyclopedia. The letters into which he had read so much (here he drew out the lacy fragment of paper on which he had jotted his aide-mémoire so many years ago): that "OP" did not refer to any operator of the charm. He might call himself "owl practitioner" or "Olive Prouty" or "old port" or "Oliver Perry" or "other people" till he was azure of aspect but it would have no effect upon the pragmatic solid substance of mirror magic. Likewise it was ridiculous to assign Levimeyerabloch the name of "Oy" and put him incapably to guiding the magic mirror in its powerful play. He, Till Orangespiegel, had goofed, and well deserved the fiasco into which his scheme had devolved.

That much cleared from his thinking, what remained?

Well, there was the magic itself, which was tangible enough and which he had not erred in the preparation of. The magic mirror WAS magic - and vastly potent. If he could but get back to the set-up as it had existed and *himself* guide the mirror, what miracles might not yet take place?

He'd retrieve the errant "tea-tray" —surely some way he'd be able to get it back!—and then... he would enorange all Oz, take over the Emerald City and turn it into the Amber City...!

No, he wouldn't! He was regenerate now. Yes, he *was*—for the sake of Cayke's blue eyes—and if he got back his magic he was going to use it for the general, not private, good.

And then? Well, he'd recover the smallest, the actually magic,

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mirror as well. No one knew it but Till himself but at the time he had feared that Lev and the others might try to take it from him by force—or worse, smash it in their eagerness—he had stuffed the magic mirror in a secret hiding place. Where under the sun and moon might be that hiding place now?!

But by the time he had got that far in his cogitations, Till Orangespiegel was saved for the side of the angels.

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

Mr. Fruakx, Levimeyerabloch, Button Bright and the Woozy had not been standing still all the while Cayke and Till roamed the desert. First there was their gala reception at the Emerald City where they told the assembled celebrities of their stirring adventures of the previous weeks.

“We had our own adventures!” boasted Princess Dorothy, “though funnily enough we never left home.” Then she related to the new-arrived travelers all about the awful confusions of the directions reversal and the strange case of the slice of orange that had lain—and still lay—over the land. “But Ozma says let it stay,” she ended a wee bit petulantly. Like all true lovers of Oz she was somewhat conservative and wanted everything always to stay just as it always had been; unchanging, like a cardboard flower.

“Yes,” soothed the fairy queen. “It’s not doing any harm exactly. And you know, I always did have in the back of my mind—quite unarticulated but still there—a feeling there was something, shall we say ‘unsymmetrical’? about just one of the six primary, rainbow, colors being omitted from the Oz color pattern.”

“Funny you should say that, your grace,” remarked Lev the peddler, drawing a little nearer the royal seat. “That was what

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the Orangespiegel person always maintained.”

“Now tell me about him,” commanded the Girl Ruler kindly. As the others drifted away by twos and threes to further toast and tease the Woozy, frog, and boy, she rested her chin in her hand and looked at the itinerant merchant expectantly.

He told her all he knew and tried not to harbor resentments as he did it.

“You think then he’s not really a dangerous individual,” summed up Ozma, “a-socially motivated?”

“Not really,” admitted Lev. “He is very vain and boastful and had certain—rather strong—delusions of grandeur, and then let’s not forget that the tradition of merry—or even not so merry - pranks is strong in his family.”

“It might be best then to allow him to stay out of the country for a while?”

“Mm, yes, I think so,” agreed Lev. “There’s just one thing that worries me, Your Majesty—”

“That being..?”

“Well, the man still retains the magic mirror he created. It’s potent. I held it myself and I could feel how it pulled at - and was pulled by—that flying projectile in the sky. It was all I could do to keep my grasp on it. Some awfully powerful force was at work there! though I couldn’t begin to explain what. Of course the Till creature blamed me for willfully ‘waving it about’! He’d never held or attempted to control the newly magicized mirror. He didn’t know what a powerful talisman he had!”

“And so?”

“He had the idea that certain individuals or entities, designated by particular ‘mystic’ code letters or names, had to play a part in any successful trolldom. I don’t think so. And one day, if he’s not totally pig-headed and consequently allows his wise-owl head its turn, he’s going to realize just how much his mirror after all can do. Then watch out!”

“Oh, dear.” Ozma looked solemn. “Do you think it might be advisable to—er, take the talisman away from him while there’s time?”

“I should say, the moment when and if he tries to re-enter Oz, yes, Your Highness.”

“Shall you and I agree then?: whenever either gets word the man is back we’ll meet and plan our strategy?”

That’s how they left it, and Levimeyerabloch went off about his itinerant business. With him went the Frogman, who felt he had found at last, in constant travel, a happy medium between ponds that were either too big or too small for him. They stayed together for several years until the Frogman, who had taken to wearing checked or spotted weskits, accepted a position as barker—or croaker—with a traveling carney, a niche that fitted his personality rather well.

The Woozy, having had his run, settled down contentedly in the palace yards and stables again, and Button Bright disappeared, a thing he did regularly without anyone ever taking it seriously[§].

Years passed by and the strange momentary reversals of the land’s directions became only a memory, though a vivid one, with the “Orange Slice”, as the region came to be known, as a daily reminder of it. Those in the know breathed gradually easier as it became clear that the assumed author of the freak was not imminently going to repeat it.

In 1919 a whole bevy of peculiar strangers came to Oz, providing a momentary diversion[§]. Of more lasting consequence was the arrival in the same year of the Royal Historian of Oz himself. In his honor the tower on the westward side of the Palace of Magic, matching the Wizard’s own, was redecorated and there the R.H. resided for a number of years - until he moved to the rambling old Wimugiqua Hotel on the outskirts of the city, with its broad verandahs, golf links, and artificial fly-casting ponds, where he said he felt more like he “belonged”. It had a charming prospect over Lake Quad.

Ozma and the Wizard became the greatest friends with the Historian: ‘Frank’, as he asked to be called, without tiresome

§ See *The Scarecrow of Oz*.

§ See *The Green Dolphin of Oz*. Editor’s notes.

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adulation. He was invited to conference whenever any matter of policy arose. In particular the group loved to talk over the changes in the character of Oz that were taking place during the tenure of the new Royal Historian.

“Frankly” (as anything said by that genial gentleman must, by definition, be) “I like the lighter more youthful rollicking manner of things now,” opined the old Historian. “Let’s face it: in my time in office the atmosphere was getting a bit stodgy. There was an awe-stricken, too solemn attitude to such personages as yourself, my dear—” here he laid a grandfatherly hand on Ozma’s sleeve— “which was quite absent from the first, un-self-conscious books.”

His listeners didn’t try to contradict him. “But now this Orange Slice, R.H.—er, Frank: what’s your feeling about that?” asked the Wizard.

“It is a bit much, isn’t it?” said the Historian with a chuckle. “And yet when you get right down to it, why not?... Though next thing we know there’ll be a brown, grey, black, or white country as well, I suppose.”

“Oh, I think there’s enough of those last two out in the great world,” demurred Ozma. “There, I’m told, everything is either black or white.”

“Except Sweden,” put in the Wizard; “there it’s all grey.”

“Well, Kansas too,” reminded the Historian “—at least, some years ago. Anyway, let’s hope *those* colors—or lack of them—never spread to Oz,” he concluded piously.

“But brown now,” said Ozma musingly. “I may have to work on that.”

And they parted with pleasant laughter.

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

What goes up must come down.

In the case of the jet-(and magic-) propelled 'tea-tray' this began to happen three years, three months, and three days after that equinox when all Oz suddenly went flopsy-flurvy - and partly orange to boot. Another three years/months/days and the thing was within shooting distance of Oz again. Well, of the whole Earth, of course, but only Oz could be affected by the magic (at second hand) of the mirror.

The period coincided with that of the return of Till Orangespiegel to the magic land. That happened in a droll way about a year after he had decided to turn over a new leaf and become a force for good in his adopted country.

The camels who for so many months had been the supporters of Cayke and Till in their desert wanderings had, on the occasion of the couple's reduction to servitude by the Dewan, been flung—well, shoved—into one of the ruler's camel pens. There they made a point of not talking, so no one ever learned that they were special, Ozian, camels whom it would be well to keep under particular lock and key. Hence, the first time opportunity permitted, the two animals took to their heels (do camels *have* heels?) and made quietly off.

They did not forget their erstwhile companions, however.

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After only five years back in their accustomed Oz setting the two grew restive again and resolved to revisit places fragrant with memory. Keeping to desert areas where they could get all the sagebrush and tumbleweeds they had need of to browse on, they made their way back to Far-Es-Ukaam, which, indeed, was nearly as far as one could come and still be in the Deadly Desert, for it lay only a league from the Burzee border.

There, ambling along an insignificant side street, the two camels happened to pass the jailhouse window where Till Orangespiegel leaned all day, gazing out in despondent and utter boredom.

“Hey!!” he yelled and began to jump up a down. “Med! Mel! Stop!! It’s me!”

The camels paused and raised their eyebrows, just as if the ex-O.P. were not one of two they had come all that way to find. Then with suitable dignity they drew near jail window and gravely enquired of the prisoner how he was.

He told them. His complete reply would cover a couple of pages, so we’ll skip it. In the course of conversation he did also reveal where and how the cookie cook was. “She too dreams of the day when we’ll escape,” he said pointedly.

The camels hemmed and hawed and chewed a little, then said, “Wait here!” and sauntered off.

When they were out of sight they shifted gears and fairly *ran* down the avenue leading to the servants’ entrance of the capital messuage (also well named) of the Dewan. There they sent in their card and in a few minutes Cayke appeared, flapping her apron and thrilled to see her old friends.

“Can you spare a moment?” said Mel the Bactrian camel.

“Or a few years?” added Med.

A twinkle adorned Cayke’s blue eye and she said, “I think so! I’ll just get my things.” Then she ran inside, threw around her her serape, rummaged in an armoire for her rope, and rejoined her long-lost comrades for the flight to freedom.

Before anyone in lethargic Far-Es-Ukaam troubled to take note of what they were up to the trio made their way unobtru-

sively back to the jail. There it was but the work of a moment for Cayke to loop the (infinitely stretchable) rope about Mel's hinder hump, then knot the other end through the bars of Till's window.

One long strong pull by the camel and the whole metal grating popped out, followed by the collapse of the entire mud-brick wall of the cell. A thick cloud of grey dust swirled up—and when it cleared none of the Ozites was anywhere to be seen.

By nightfall the quartet felt themselves safe from pursuit. The Dewan, who was not dumb, only dirty, had put together, from hints gathered over the years in his scant dealings with his pastry cook, a conviction that, in matters touching the cook, Brigadier Gosj-al-Gitowtt and his merry men would not be as cruel as they ought. No use sending them after the flying foursome. They would probably not find them.

In a couple of weeks of oasis-hopping the camels and their riders made it back to Quadlinga, whence it was a matter of one or two days' journey to reach the spherodome of the Orangespiegels.

"What ho! then, Pill my dear," cried her brother at the door, trying to be hearty and not show the ravages of five years in a cell. "Sorry I was delayed. Is that caneton still edible?"

Pill had a hand on a hip and a quizzical, though withal overjoyed, look in her eye. She gave her brother a peck. "Not that caneton, dear; it got too high, in the end. But A caneton. Just piping hot. And an extra jug of orange sauce with yams in it, on the side... You see, I knew you were coming."

Till Orangespiegel really did do a double take at that intelligence. "H-how so?" he stammered.

At that the sliding doors to the drawing room opened and a merry throng appeared. Levimeyerabloch, Mr. Fruakx the Frogman, Button Bright, and even the Woozy! (The Charming Cheetah was having rather a dull time of it in the stable.)

Lev stepped forward and offered a cordial hand while the Frogman flew into the embrace of Cayke the cookie cook—and for a while there was hubbub. When the noise subsided

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Orangespiegel presented Cayke formally to his sister.

"She's lovely," gushed Pill.

"She's engaged," countered Till, "—to me!"

"She uses G.I. soap," put in Button Bright in explanation.

"'Engaged'!?" echoed everyone with animation.

Then Orangespiegel told the circumstances. "Yes. We decided on it during our journey out of the desert. She's marrying me for my honey."

The Woozy could understand that motivation. The others required more explanation. "I adore her, you see," the magic-dabbler filled them in. "She can't see me for lookin'. Cayke loves a bold bedouin—what's his name again?: Gosj-al-Gitowtt. But he's unavailable. And when I happened to let drop that our orange-blossom bees produce the finest honey in all Quadlinga, if not all Oz—"

"That's right," confirmed the Woozy, who had had time to become an expert on Orangespiegel Entire.

"Well, Cayke decided she might consent to a trial engagement. It turns out honey-baking is one of her specialities. You must try her honey chews and nectar nuggets..."

The two ladies in short order got confidential over recipes and immediately such phrases could be heard coming from them as "a pinch of cardamom" and "reserve the skim and gratin".

"Speaking of 'skim'," said Levimeyerabloch, "is the pot on, dear Madam Pill?" He was feeling vastly relieved that he need not engage in fisticuffs with Orangespiegel, from whom he had parted in such anger.

"Coming right up," confirmed his hostess and carried Cayke off to the kitchen.

"But this is wonderful!" cried Till. "My sister says you knew we were coming'."

"That's right," the peddler constated, as the males all settled down in the drawing room. "Witch Glinda got the word: the 'Glinda's Book of Records', you know. I think Ozma said it read something like 'Till Orangespiegel, reformed, leaves for home.' Glinda radiod Ozma, Ozma rounded up me and the others—"

and here we are..."

"Splendid, splendid," commended the ex-Owl Practitioner. This being friendly instead of inimical was already bearing fruit, it looked like! "A little welcoming-home committee?" he characterized.

"Partly that, surely," agreed Lev. "But I must be frank, Mr. Orangespiegel; we're also here to confirm that word reformed' and just to make sure that you, in fact, do plan no further employment of the magic mirror—" He held up a hand as Orangespiegel seemed about to protest. "There are compensations! Princess Ozma has taken a liking to the 'Orange Slice' as we call it and agrees to permitting a very sizeable wedge of her domain to remain orange in color. And you are to be governor! dependent upon the extent of your co-operation with her over-all plan for the governance of Oz and the suppression of unnecessary magic."

Various features of Lev's speech might have nettled the old vainglorious and testy Till Orangespiegel but the five years in durance vile - and Cayke's blandishments—had after all mellowed the practitioner and he had learned patience—and was now seeing how it paid! He held his peace, put on a gratified expression, and he and the road merchant presently went in to dinner arm in arm.

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

After the commotion in 1917 Princess Ozma, urgently supported in her view by the Wizard Oz and the learned Professor Wogglebug, decided it was important to increase the scope of Oz astronomical observatories. She was not in ignorance of the fact that besides magic, a flying projectile had caused the strange though fleeting reversal of directions in Oz. It might be as well to keep an eye on that projectile, which, however, had very soon flown beyond the range of existing Oz telescopes.

Six and a half years was more than enough time to see the ordering and establishment of the new telescopes, one in the Wizard's tower and the other, even more powerful, on top of the Green Mountain in a new extension of the College of Knowledge.

It was here, at the Emerald City—Quadling border, one night early in 1924, that the professor himself was doing duty at round-the-clock monitoring of the telescope when he saw something that threw him into the greatest excitement. His agitation was such that he leapt on the telescope, crawled up it to the aperture in the observatory dome, and launched himself into the night sky. With a great clittering of wings he flew away into the north.

Oz Diggs was awakened at the Palace of Magic and hurried with the professor one flight up to *his* observatory. One glance

was sufficient to confirm that the errant “tea-tray” was indeed back within telescopic range and presumably hurrying towards Earth “How much time do you give it, H.M.?” asked the Wizard.

Can wogglebugs blush? If so, this one did. “It was most unprofessional of me,” he confessed. “I was too agitated! I didn’t stop to make the proper calculations. However, I’ll hazard a guess: two days? ... Then I’m very much afraid we’ll see a replay of that upsetting directions-reversal we had before. And there’s no telling how long it will last, with the projectile going in the opposite direction from previously—”

“Indeed!” broke in the Wizard. “What if it should be captured by the earth’s pull and go into orbit?!”

“Hmm, a serious possibility. But there are so many variables! Do we know whether the presumed enchantment will still be in effect? That journey through deep space may have ‘cleaned’ the object of magic influences. It *may* fly harmlessly past.”

“Never mind. I don’t think we should lose any time in getting with Ozma over this,” opined the Wizard.

The fairy ruler when awakened threw on a peignoir and hurried into conference with the two savants in her private sitting room. She agreed about the unpredictability of behavior of the tea-tray. “Let’s don’t take any chances. I’ll radio through to the Lords of Light and alert them. They can usually deal with matters of this sort—”

“But, Your Majesty, don’t forget,” cautioned the Wogglebug, “that there may still be magic at play here—whereas the Lords’ influence, if I’m not mistaken, is limited solely to NATURAL cosmic phenomena.”

“Oh dear, that wretched magic mirror again!” exclaimed the Princess. “You’re perfectly right, professor. Well, there’s nothing for it. We must simply send word to the party at Orangespiegel’s: to get possession of the mirror at all costs. Glinda will know how to deal with it. We mustn’t leave a stone unturned—” She broke off, started again; “How much time do you give us, gentlemen?”

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Again the wise men had bolted without doing calculations! But time had seemed of the essence in letting the Girl Ruler know of their quandary. "Three days?" hazarded the Wizard.

"Two," stated Prof. Wogglebug :with more assurance.

"Oh, goodness!" exclaimed Ozma. "We must make haste. Half a tick, my friends!" she adjured jocularly and ran away into her dressing room. In a moment she was back, in blue jeans and a shirt and doing up her hair brusquely with a rubber band. "Come on!" and she led the way, half running down the malachite corridor heading for the mews.

The Sawhorse never slept so was alert and frisky as usual when his beloved mistress came to him. Ozma told him the story concisely. "You've got that?" she demanded. The horse creaked in assent. "Off you go then!.. They're to be polite; it seems the man Orangespiegel is prepared to listen to reason. But they must get possession of the magic mirror without fail - and take it to Glinda!"

Then the Sawhorse was off like the wind.

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

Levimeyerabloch was a kindly man—though he knew a bargain when he saw it. He also knew unhappiness when he saw it. He saw it in just five minutes the time he and his companions were forced to inform Mistress Pill Orangespiegel that her brother in all likelihood would be returning late or never.

Therefore, when he left the Emerald City in 1917 his first concern was to let his peripatetic business dealings take him at the first opportunity back to the orange spherodome. He made out that he was on an all-out drive to collect rags, bones, and bottles, but in fact his primary care was to ascertain that Pill was all right. She had been too generous a hostess—in happier days—for him to be able to ignore her trouble now.

“Bottles?” said the goodwife at the door. “Lots of those. But I suppose you mean empty ones? Ours are all full—of orange curaao Till put up over the years.” At the mention of her brother a sigh escaped along with the woman’s words. Lev winced.

“Come in, please,” Mme. Pill went on. “I’m going to serve you a glass of the very curaao.” As the merchant followed her into her sewing room Pill went on; “Bones? Now where would we get those? We wouldn’t think of going against Princess Ozma’s edicts and one of those prohibits the eating of any living creatures.”

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She WAS naive, thought Lev. Was she really no more clued in than that she had no idea of her brother's many highly extra-legal activities? And as for not eating living creatures, that was a rule broken, alas - or not?, hundreds of times a day on the sly by Oz inhabitants who enjoyed a broiled trout or a roast pigeon as well as anybody. What about the gazelles Till had laid on for Lev's own cheetah without a moment's demur? Such would provide bones and to spare—if Pill were let know about them!

But the lady was going on: "Now, rags: there I can accommodate you, I think. At least would you count tatty blankets as rags?"

"These I could count as rags, yes," affirmed the peddler, smacking his lips over the liqueur tangy with the bitter peel of a hundred sun-ripened fruits.

"And what about that frightful old mattress you all used on Till's last excursion?" Another sigh. "I don't know why you bothered to bring it back. It's still in the dray out in the shed. It's full of holes—and mice too, like as not."

"I'll take it off your hands," promised Lev.

Well, that was the beginning—or at any rate a rebeginning. Pill was pleased to have a man to do for again and Lev was pleased to be done for; however, he was amused to jest to himself, as a ladies' man he was by no means done-for! He ended staying as Miss Orangespiegel's guest for a week that time and when he moved on to call again at Sorceress Glinda's he was singing her praises loudly.

"Really a most excellent woman," he declared to the red ruler; "she goes a long way to make up for the shortcomings of her brother."

From then on the merchant managed to call in at the spherodome at least once every two months on his rounds. It was not long before he was assigned his own permanent room in the round orange mansion and there he would come and go almost as lord of the manor. Pill had just brought him breakfast in bed there on the morning after her brother's long-delayed

return home when the couple heard a loud commotion beyond the carrot-colored curtains.

"I thought I heard a cheetah squeal!" declared Levimeyerabloch.

"And I heard a clatter of hoofs," returned his hostess. "But we keep no horses!"

Now there could be no doubt something was afoot, for they heard a very loud gruzzing right under Lev's window.

The peddler drew his dressing gown about him and jumped out of bed to run to the window. The carrot curtains pulled asunder - and the couple stuck their heads out.

The Sawhorse was hardly winded. He glanced up, then beat a tattoo with his hoofs in gratification and whinnied a greeting.

"He's come to see you!" yelped the Woozy enjoying the excitement. "Have you got the magic mirror?!"

"*I?* I should be having the magic mirror?! Mr. Till and I have not even spoken of it yet."

"The Princess—" began the Sawhorse. For him there was only one Princess. "The Princess!" he rebegan. But the Sawhorse hardly ever finished anything, that is: speeches.

"Ozma has to have it!" explained the Woozy. "At least; Mr. Orangespiegel isn't to have it! I mean, if he has it, he has to—not have it!... Oh, I'm not explaining this well... Where's Mr. O.?"

"Wait a minute! I'm coming down!" Levimeyerabloch threw on his caftan and slippers and followed Madam Pill downstairs.

In ten minutes everybody in the house was in congress assembled around the dining table. All the news the Sawhorse brought had been expounded and the crisis stood clear to all. Everything hung on the magic mirror. And all eyes hung on Till Orangespiegel.

"Oh—er, the magic mirror!" said he, and his owl eyes blinked, though not very wisely. "I'm afraid I haven't got it!"

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

“Rush, rush! Oh, hasten! “ cried Lev the peddler to the Charming Cheetah.

“I’m rushing all I can,” the cheetah threw over his shoulder, but halved again as much his efforts and the buggy *almost* achieved the speed of light - if it didn’t fall apart first.

The poor cheetah had almost as much as he could handle. Crammed in the buggy were Levimeyerabloch, Till Orangespiegel, the Frogman and Button Bright. Alongside him on the (just here) orange brick road flew the Sawhorse, and somewhere in the rear lolloped the Woozy, falling, alas, more behind every moment. (The ladies, perhaps with sighs of relief, had stayed home in the orange mansion.)

The Sorceress of the South was waiting the terrace when the still-happily-one-piece carriage drew up in a swirl of dust. “Right!” she cried without ceremony or even saying Hello. “Follow me to the work room.” And when they got there: “Ozma’s been on the air to me. I know about the emergency. The Book said you were on the way. What can I do for you?” she enquired as they all took seats.

“Hi, Queen,” said Button Bright.

“Hello, Butt.” Glinda flashed the boy a brilliant but brief smile. It was seven years later and he was still ten years old (to

look at). Her glance traveled back to Till Orangespiegel and the peddler.

"Your Magicty!" exclaimed Levimeyerabloch "you wouldn't by any chance remember that old mattress I unloaded here six - maybe seven years ago?"

"A *mattress*?" The witch smiled in amusement - but quickly she racked her memory. "I can't be sure. I have a vague recollection of something—"

"It was all full of holes," prompted Lev, "—useless. I just wanted rid of it. You were kind enough—"

"Yes!" stated the sorceress, illumination suddenly breaking through. "I got Jinjur to dispose of it." She flicked a switch on her work-bench. A moment's delay, then "General? Glinda speaking. A certain old mattress - with orange ticking—in a design of sunbursts—" It was all coming back to her. "Ah! you do? ... Yes. Hold everything. We'll be right over. What?"

Glinda turned aside to the others. "She wants to know why it's wanted ... ?"

"The magic mirror's in it!" blurted Till Orangespiegel without omsweep.

"Oh, great heavens!" cried Glinda. "This *is* serious." Then, "Jinjur! be checking what happened to it!"

In a quarter of an hour the party were gathered in ex-General Jinjur's bachelor quarters near the gatehouse. "Sure," said Jinjur with no hesitation, "I remember the incident. Nutt took it off my hands—that's Corporal Margaret Nutt, retired. She and Munn and some of the others were going camping and thought they could get some use out of it. I'll have Munn in." Jinjur in her turn flipped a switch.

"Corporal Nutt's retired?" asked Glinda. "I'd forgotten."

"*She'd* forgotten!" said Jinjur with a flash of wit. "That is, she was getting forgetful. That's why she took her discharge early. It's been a few years now. I don't think she was always too careful bout holding down the aging process."

The condition of agelessness for living creatures in Oz was not an automatic thing. If it were, all babies would remain

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forever one day old in appearance and development, but in fact they grew and aged normally until instructed, at very tender years, by their elders how to slow down or stop the aging process. This was accomplished by a brief easy daily ritual we won't go into here. But Nut Meg, as she was called by her fellows, had, it seemed, been careless.

"Ah, Munn; come in," ordered Jinjur. "There was an old mattress. You and Nutt and some of the others took it over—back in 'seventeen. I think you meant to use it on some camping expedition or other. Know what became of it?"

Brigadier Sinny Munn puckered her brow. "Why, yes, General," she said in a moment. "We left all that gear with Nutt. The party ended up at what was to be her retirement cottage."

"Could you point out the place to us? Looks like her grace and some of us will have to go interview Nutt."

Back at the palace they all piled into swan chariots half an hour later and took off. The flight to the Nutt cottage took only twenty minutes as performed by the swift swans but that was time enough for there all to enjoy a sweeping view over Glinda's red demesne. As the pink palace faded from view they came in sight of a stand of mighty redwoods to the east—and far away in the west was an orange horizon.

At least... "I know I must be wrong, your grace," said the Frogman, who was sitting opposite Glinda, "but I have the funniest feeling we're flying south - though I know the general said Miss Nutt's cottage was to the north."

"That's right," affirmed the Sorceress. "See? the sun's right behind us. And that forest lies to the northeast of my palace. Wait a minute! Where *is* the forest? Just a second ago—That's queer; it seems to be underneath us." Hastily Glinda oriented herself - or tried to. They were still flying with the sun at their backs. "Crumbs!" the witch permitted herself an expletive. "It's starting again!"

She trumpeted a signal to her swan, then called across to those in the other chariot; "Just keep your bird flying straight on! away from the sun. And the rest of you had better keep your

eyes shut till we land. You'll get less confused that way!"

The sorceress gave no further explanation but it may not have been necessary. They could all tell something most uncanny was going on. At one moment the orange horizon would seem to be west, the next moment it was in the east. 'If only,' thought Glinda rather wildly, 'we could fly upside down! Then everything would still seem right.' But that would only disorient the swans as well, who up to now continued to fly unperturbed—besides dumping overboard anybody without a *very* firm grip.

One thing was sure by the time they alighted—with a gasp of relief by the worried witch—on the lawn outside a round pink bungalow; everybody was left-handed.