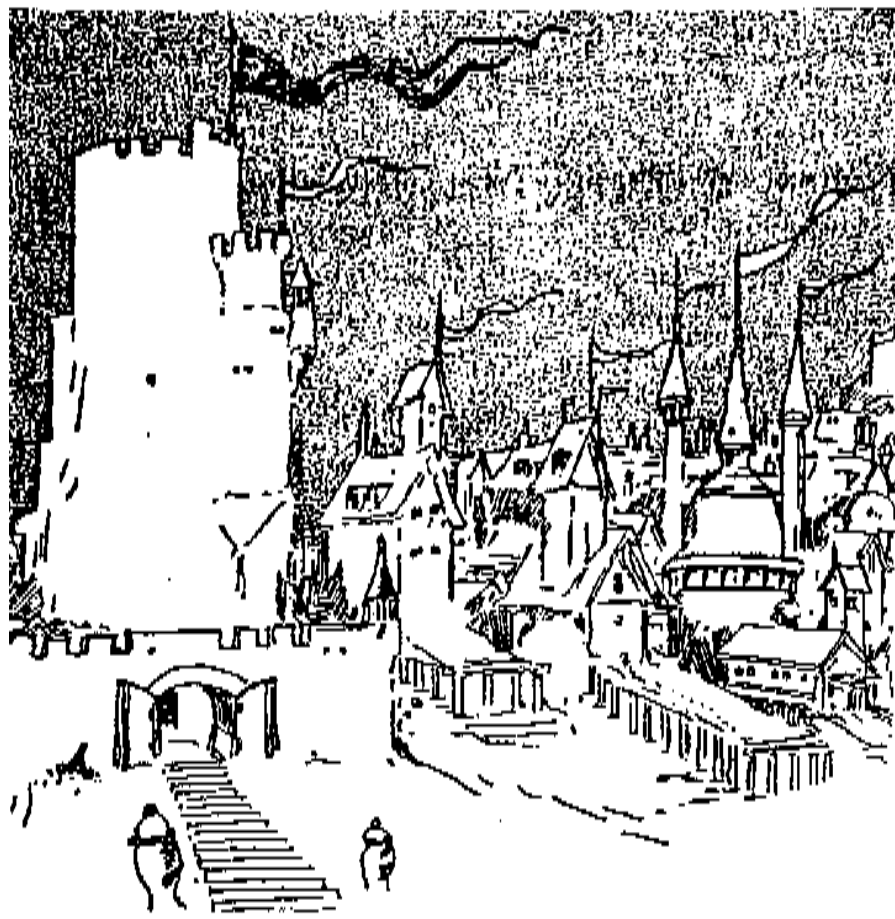


# THE TALKING CITY OF OZ



# The Talking City *of* OZ

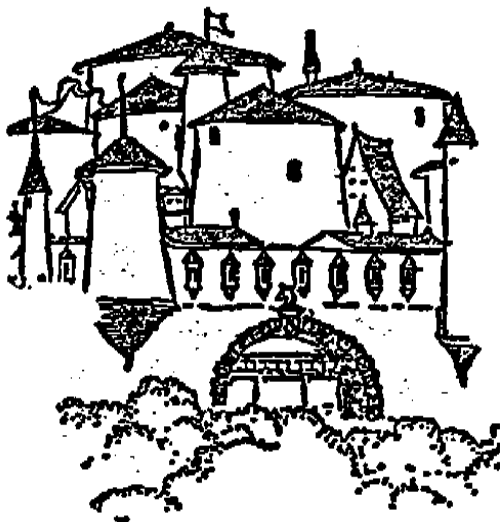
by Ron Baxley, Jr.

Edited by March Laumer

Founded on and Continuing

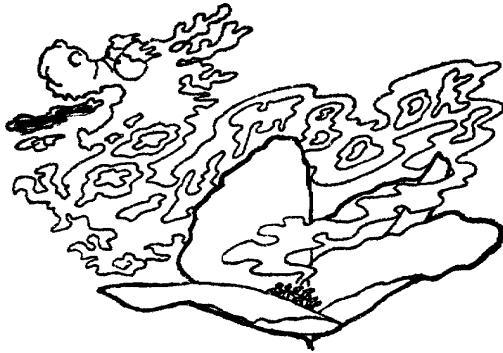
The Famous Oz Stories

by L. Frank Baum



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D E D I C A T I O N

To the memory of  
**L. Frank Baum,**  
without whom there would be no Oz  
—and who demonstrated  
that even machinery  
can have its place  
in fairy lore.

He taught me to deal with  
the monsters  
that lurk in our childhood!



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## C H A P T E R O N E

It appeared that Princess Ozma of Oz stood no more upon forms of protocol than that she could, on occasion, employ her splendid throne seat as merely a dining room chair. She had just done so at the moment our story opens. In her company was her friend, also a princess: Dorothy of Kansas and Oz, and they had just partaken of an early and modest green lunch.

“Funny thing, Ozma,” said Dot. “I’ve just been reminded of the time you were faced with that awful punchbowl full of a poisonous—literally—green liquid at the time of the adventure of *The Crown of Oz*.<sup>§</sup> Remember? It was placed right here in front of your throne, they say—that time the redoubtable Fattywiggins ended saving the day..?”

“Yes, indeed.” In exchange for Dorothy’s resuscitation of a recollection of a scene at which she herself had not been present, the young Queen called up a tableau of which *she* had not been a witness. “This is also the very Throne Room where Oz the Great and Terrible revealed himself to be an old humbug—with those corny property presentations of a head, invisibility, fire, and a ferocious beast.”

“In the movie, you mean,” reminded Dorothy. “In actual fact the Wizard presented as a Head, right enough, but then as a

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§ Which see. (Editor’s note)

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beautiful lady. The terrible ten-limbed beast did appear, but the fire was a Ball of Fire. I was there. I remember.

“But, Ozma dear” — the Kansas girl went on to speak of things far more marvelous than those old turn-of-the-century stage effects — “wouldn’t it be wonderful if the walls here could speak! What tales they could tell! Aunt Em used to talk about walls having ears — and ‘If only the walls could talk..’ Of course with her it was just a figure of speech. But here in Oz it could become literally true. May you not make it happen?! I would really love to hear the walls talk!”

Ozma looked at Dorothy and thought for a moment, then turned to gaze abstractedly at the emerald-encrusted knob on the end of one arm-rest. She raised a long elegant eyebrow and replied:

“That would be rather amusing, I suppose. As you know, I was not around when the Emerald City as such was built. But as for the castle that stood near here in ancient times: if its walls were to talk, I fear it would be rather boring. Nothing much happened in Oz until the Wizard came along. Frankly, I suspect those old-timey people may have been rather blockheads.”

The two girls laughed at this sally, yet Dorothy remained pensive. “Or even better,” she suggested: “not alone walls talking but what if the entire Emerald City could speak — all by itself! Imagine listening to the talk of the town, from its own point of view, telling what it had been like to be created by the Wizard.”

One might have thought that Wizard O.Z. Diggs himself could be applied to for a description of how he ‘pulled it off’ in that fabled time when he manufactured the celebrated city out of whole cloth — or rather, emeralds. But the fact was that the Wizard had just recently departed in his current hot-air balloon for the Land of Zo, the famous mirror-image country where everything was like in Oz, only backwards. oZ ni nekops egaugnalt eht no pu gniob shtnom eerht tsal eht tneps d’eH. He couldn’t say he was fluent even yet, but off he’d gone. Zo is a relatively unexplored country and Diggs was going to do some map-making and anthropologizing.

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Both ladies being cognizant of the Wizard's absence and thus of the momentary unknowability of the information desired by Dorothy, Ozma turned the conversation by pointing a long finger at the wall and saying, "What about a fly on the wall? Talking to one might be the next best thing to being one."

Dorothy gasped. "Ozma sweetest, have you taken leave of your royal senses? I don't want to be a fly! Whatever possessed you—" In desperation the girl glanced about the august chamber to try to get a glimpse of whatever had made her Ruler come up with such a bizarre thought.

At once she spotted a green housefly feasting on a large lump of lime jello that adhered to a lower section of the wall. Dorothy herself, in a don't-care mood or even a fit of pique (but then who could ever feel pique in the presence of the winsome girl regent of Oz?!), had flung the large green gobbet off her dessert plate at the wall, where it remained clinging, like the peach in the film of *Carmen Jones*, rather unconvincingly. It was now obvious what had directed Ozma's thought.

Actually the little queen had found the breach of etiquette merely entertaining. She attributed the lapse to clumsiness but was of course too polite to tax her favorite with it. She herself *never* threw jello about.

Dorothy smiled sheepishly. To give herself a stance she got up and spoke to the emerald-hued fly. "Could you tell me any of the stories you have undoubtedly heard while you've been working that wall?"

The fly looked around, startled, but at once realized the augustness of the company in which he now found himself. Quickly he pulled a tiny handkerchief from his breast pocket. Well, 'tiny' to us. It was about the size of a quarter of an ordinary postage stamp (not the ones with Elvis Presley on them) and thus, for him, could also have done duty as a bed sheet. He wiped his mouths delicately. Then and only then he replied in a squeaky voice: "I was educated at Wogglebug College. I have only been engaged in this vicinity for a moment. I hear that all my predecessors on this beat have been executed by your



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military. Totally unjustly, it goes without saying.”

Dorothy put her hand to her mouth (not to her ear; her hearing was phenomenal, to catch what a fly said at four yards’ distance). She was taken aback by the green fly’s spate of non sequiturs. She took the last one first. “Oh, I’m sorry,” she said perfunctorily. Hurting flies had never bothered the young Kansan that much. “It must have been the Soldier with the Green Whiskers. You see, he hasn’t had many adventures since General Jinjur and her army... Well, not to say that what he did was right or...” Dot’s voice died away uncertainly. She was not used to apologizing to flies. Back in Kansas her aunt had killed them without a backward glance, swatting them with a rolled-up number of the *Kansas City Register*.

“Oh, Jinjur,” took up the fly. “I know that whole outcry, though not from harvesting this particular wall. I took a course, Oz History 101, at the prestigious—”

“Wogglebug University,” supplied Dorothy, casually elevating the institution’s status. “Yes, I know. Actually, Jinjur’s takeover bid is an old chestnut of a tale. It seems like no one in Oz has adventures, or even makes up good new stories, any more. The ones about me or Ozma or the countless other heroes and celebrities of the pantheon have all been told so often I just get... impatient,” she said, striving to use a diplomatic word. “I want some new adventures to happen!”

The fly went on as if she had not spoken. “To get to hear those stories you must enroll in the Professor’s classes.”

In her distraught mood the girl had moved even further from the card table at which she and her chum had lunched and now knelt down to peer into her fly interlocutor’s large (relatively) compact eyes. She couldn’t believe what she intuited. Could it be that this tiny citizen did not know who she was?!: she, Princess Dorothy, slayer of witches, one of the greatest adventure-havers in Oz history, and furthermore a holder of a degree from that selfsame university? The fly’s apparent earlier awe must have been directed at the dainty enthroned queen alone.

Dorothy found the perception humbling. Now she nodded

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meekly. (She had once been [additionally] celebrated for the meekness thing.) She said, "Do you know any new stories you could tell me? Free?" Dot was never one to discount economics, even in Oz where there was no money exchange.

It seemed, however, that this was not the proper tactic to pursue with the green fly. He shook his head counter-clockwise (not up and down as people do). He rubbed some of his various feet-hands together, wily-lawyer fashion, making Dorothy think, erroneously, that he was anticipating bloviating to her. Instead he said severely, "No, no, no. I am new to this vicinity! How many times do I have to tell you? I haven't yet heard any tales these walls may have to relate. Are you weak in the intellect, or something?"

Dorothy did not appreciate such rudeness, nay, insults. However, ever charitable, she put down the social gaffe to the fly's feelings at his recent bereavements. Indeed, he must feel terrible at losing so many of his friends. She had always supposed that flies took no umbrage at being swatted at but merely buzzed off quite jollily. Now she began to think differently.

Suddenly she remembered something. There had indeed lately been a reign of terror among Palace of Magic flies. But!, egged on by the tenderhearted Tin Woodman, who was even more painstaking than perhaps even God in noting the fall of sparrows, wise Ozma had sent to the cupboard where she kept her magic appliances and had a peck of Powder of Life brought out and liberally applied to the 'corpses' of flies that soldier Omby Amby had left strewn just everywhere.

The flies were, of course, this being Oz, not actually dead, only stunned. Still, some of them who were squashed flat or lacked the odd wing could give a convincing imitation of decease. Now all these were up and flying again, or, where prevented by laws of aerodynamics, crawling about fairly vigorously.

Ozma too had had her own awakening. Now cognizant that flies as well were people, she appointed the revived insects her personal attendants. Now a cloud of them nested in her hair

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and she said that, with their shining wings, they reminded her of fairies. She issued an edict: flies were now officially more than welcome to reside in her kingdom.

Let me hasten to add that of course these were not the sort of nasty flies one finds on dung heaps or the like. These were *educated* Oz flies, many of them holding degrees from Wogglebug U. Of delicate appetites, they only really enjoyed eating things like lime jello or the bits of pulp that careless people leave on orange peels.

To return to Dorothy on her meekness kick: “I am sorry,” she said to her new fly acquaintance in an access of real regret, “but maybe I can help...?”

“What can *you* do to help?” asked the green fly sceptically and, as usual, rudely. He ‘scrunched’ (screwed?) up the bottom of the tiny mouth at the point where his head narrowed.

Dot pressed on with her confession of fault (even though not her own): “You see, the soldier was tired of flies landing on him and burrowing up under his green whiskers where it tickled. He took a fly swatter—”

The green fly buzzed excitedly at mention of the hateful word. “Don’t try to explain it away! A fly swatter—how crude and primitive! Bringing in an entire *swat* team to terrorize tiny flies! Anyway, the whole sordid story has been reported to Professor Wogglebug at the college. I’m sure he will take steps—”

“Will you let me finish?!” demanded Dorothy. Reluctantly the fly cocked his head as if condescending to listen.

“A fly swatter, pursued Dot, “is an instrument made of metal and mesh, used to exterminate flies. The Wizard brought one along from Nebraska on his first arrival here. So you see: such weapons have a long and honorable history—”

“How horrible!” screamed the fly. “*Must* you persist with this catalogue of crime? It’s more than I can bear.” Stress had affected the fly’s mind and he began to ‘surf’ mentally: “Just imagine: the dear Tin Woodman’s joints—indeed, all of him—is/are made of metal and *he* always cries upon stepping on a

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beetle. Yet now you inform me that the very materials that splendid gentleman is made of are also used to construct engines of death. I can't stand it! and won't stand *for* it!"

"Poor Mr. Fly!" commiserated Dorothy. "Do please let me explain—" But she found she was talking to the air. The green fly had buzzed out of the nearest (open) window and away in the direction of Wogglebug University (or College, as the case may be).

Patient Ozma had waited on her throne throughout the above colloquy, barely being able to make out anything the fly said until the moment when he screamed. Much good the recollection of her benevolence in applying the Powder of Life to the massacred insects could do now.

"Talking to a fly on the wall didn't give much joy, Ozma," deplored Dot.

"It is rather too bad," conceded the Girl Ruler, "that the powder of life seems to create amnesia when used on entities already living but just temporarily put out of commission. Your Green Fly friend's friends must have acted as if they didn't know him when they met again after their resuscitation—and one fly being much like another..."

Her words trailed off as she revisited in memory another time when he herself had played fast and loose with Life Powder. She had been a boy called Tip and, coming into possession of some of the precious dust, had used it on a pumpkin-headed man he had manufactured. This had not been a case of reviving the mock-dead, but of giving original life to an inert being such as Jack Pumpkinhead had been until that moment. Jack acted as if he were just newly born. He was completely naive: a new creation with no memory of when his wooden, cloth, and pumpkin parts had been growing trees, cotton plants, and vegetables, all beings close to the soil. The unsensing pumpkins, however, had been sufficiently alive to put up a constant struggle against being eaten by garden pests.

Ozma herself, though never having been given a dose of Powder of Life, had trouble remembering her youth as a boy.

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Sometimes she asked the Scarecrow, who had a wonderful memory, to tell the tale of their earliest adventures together. Returning to the present, she said, "I had forgotten for a moment about the life powder's bringing on amnesia."

"A bit of amnesia about amnesia?" joked Dorothy. Ozma laughed but Dot herself was soon thoughtful again. "Nothing we've tried so far has helped. If the walls aren't going to talk there seems to be no way I can hear stories of adventures—let alone have any myself."

"Why not set out on a quest of your own?" proposed the young queen logically. "I wouldn't hold you back. Indeed, I know where a secret depot of Powder of Life is kept in a cavern, measureless to man, far beyond the outskirts of Oz. What if you were to make your way there and then bring back a really large shipment of the dust? That way there would be enough for me to do as you wish and I could make the city walls talk... although..." The Ruler's words petered out.

"Although what?"

"Well, the walls, being new-activated, might not be able to tell you any old stories. We don't know just how much memory a newly living entity retains of its existence pre-life. The talking town, 'newborn' so to speak, may turn out not to remember any more than Jack Pumpkinhead did of the time when he was just a pumpkin and some tree bark."

"I don't care." Dot had got back into the don't-care mood, but this time there was no danger of flung jello. "I just want to hear it talk, n'importe what it says. But how exciting, my dear Princess, that there exists a great untapped source of life powder. You never mentioned that before."

"The Powder of Life is as dangerous as it is wonderful, Dorothy. It should only be used in the most pressing of circumstances."

"My wish is not a pressing circumstance?"

"Your wishes are always of significance to me, princess. But think of the risk of using the life-giver upon the buildings of an entire city. It could be hazardous. You know nothing larger than

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the Gump<sup>s</sup> has been brought to life heretofore... But there, dearest," the girl ruler went on, seeing her chum's fallen face, "you *are* my best friend. We shall see. As one of my chief advisers you may be sure your sage grave counsel will be given due consideration."

Ozma was being eminently fair and Dorothy could not help contrasting the present scene with that at the time of her, equally unlikely, suit to the Wizard of Oz. It had not been very friendly of him to assign her the task of killing the Witch of the West in order to achieve fulfillment of her wish just to be allowed to go home. Dorothy thought that Queen Ozma was truly the better ruler.

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§ See *The Marvelous Land of Oz*. (Editor's note)

## C H A P T E R T W O

Dorothy rushed to her room with its familiar four-poster bed and the spread sewn with wonderful soft emeralds, shiny and green as the real thing. They looked good enough to eat and sometimes the young princess would bite and chew on them. Somehow she expected them to taste like delicious creme de menthe but they only tasted like emeralds.

She took off the green gown she'd worn at lunch and put on her farm-girl outfit: a checked dress with an apron and lots of lockets. From under the bed she pulled out a carpetbag. This was one the genial Wizard of Oz had made himself when the old runner leading to his throne had begun to show wear and tear. He had personally cut out all the usable pieces with great care and turned them, ingeniously, into travel bags. He still had some on hand at the time of the Kansas girl's seminal visit to Oz and he had given her one for use during their contemplated balloon journey. Later, on Dorothy's return to Oz, she had reclaimed the useful gift. It would seem that maid Jellia Jamb had anticipated just some such development and had put it carefully aside.

The Wizard had a gift for gifts. The things he made and gave away always pleased people. Now, as she threw things into her travel bag, Dot thought of the splendid success all his presents

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had enjoyed the time he doled out brains to the Scarecrow, a heart to the Tin Woodman, and drinkable courage to the Cowardly Lion. The Scarecrow's bran'-new brain he composed of—what else?—bran. He called it “reason bran”, probably thereby giving the inspiration for ‘raisin bran’ which was invented by cereal manufacturers some years later. What if he had called it “wit bran” or “shrewdness bran”? We might have ended up eating ‘wheat bran’ or ‘shredded bran’—as of course we did.

The tin man's plush heart was indeed soft as plush and the valerian in the Lion's dish of courage of course made him valerious—or valorous. The Wizard's gift to Dorothy was the only one that backfired. That balloon journey! Dot wondered if she ever *would* get to go up with the Wizard in his air bag. For the nonce, at least, she was highly content to possess the other sort of bag intended for traveling.

Toto, a dog, was heard from belatedly. He'd been asleep in a corner of the Kansas girl's bedroom all during the formal luncheon. Earlier Toto had demonstrated a propensity to sit up and beg during his betters' repasts or, alternatively, to chase imaginary cats in and out under the card table, so Ozma had cruelly banished him elsewhere. “You see, darling,” the girl ruler explained, “I don't want our lunches to be a burden. What could be fun: chatting with you over our quiche, might turn into a nightmare if that mutt—oh, sorry, of course I mean ‘sweet animal’—were to rampage at will. See, here's a bone-ified biscuit for him. Perhaps he'd enjoy that in some secluded spot while we eat.”

The dainty Princess tendered a sizable green bone: not bone, really, but a tough and tasty piece of hardtack baked in the shape of a bone and made of bone meal. Toto could have fun with that for an hour if he was not greedy. Its hardness would be a good workout for his teeth.

The recipe for the said delicacy had been brought from The Doghouse many years before. The Doghouse was a very small Oz kingdom of dogs: small because there were so few dogs in the magical kingdom. Indeed, the Munchkins near where



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Dorothy first arrived in Oz had never seen a dog before meeting Toto.

In The Doghouse was to be found everything to rejoice a canine's heart. Signs strategically placed alerted that "Here be bones. Dig them up—and welcome!" What could be nicer?

Sometimes, when he was feeling particularly dogmatic, Toto fancied himself as King of the Doghouse. Goodness knows he often enough received invitations from the current monarch, a Saint Bernard, to come and take up his residence there. If he played his cards right he might well become royalty, just as his beloved mistress had, at such time as his friend chose to ennoble him. But, on balance, Toto always opted in the end to remain with Dorothy. Besides, he well recalled that back in Kansas "being in the doghouse" meant being in disgrace, and the sensitive Toto had no desire to be that.

Now the little animal wagged his tail energetically. He was an expert at that. The gesture meant that he was glad to see his mistress and further, that he apprehended that she was intending to set out on a journey, a grand one, he hoped. Would that he be allowed to go with her!

"Isn't it wonderful, Toto!" Dorothy exclaimed. "After all this time we're going on an adventure again!" Toto yelped. Suddenly he grew very still.

Dorothy stopped in the midst of rolling up a pair of bobby socks and asked: "What's the matter?"

The able Toto was fully capable of speaking in Oz, where all other card-carrying animals talked without hesitation. It was just that, to tease his dear little mistress, he mostly restricted himself to the speech of Kansan dogs: that is to say, barking, growling, whining. Just now he chose to emit a little "grring"-like noise (the key-note call of terriers) as well as a pedal sound: that of his clicking toenails on the marble floor as he walked toward the chamber door. This Dot had modestly closed on the occasion of her going to strip off and put on a different dress.

Toto scratched at the door sill and investigated as far as he was able nose-wise. He snorted (yes, he had snorts as well in

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the catalogue of his native noises). Finally, he uttered ‘yips’ and posed, seated, with his ear cocked like the *His Master’s Voice* dog. It became clear to Dorothy that something was afoot the other side of that door.

“Toto, what is it?” she cried, running to the door. Now the girl heard it too. “Tick - tock - tick - tock.” Dorothy breathed out, relieved. Those sounds were familiar enough. It could only be the noise, as of an old-fashioned clock, of her friend Tik-Tok, a copper robot from the land of Ev, long an intimate of the princess. Well, ‘friend’: TikTok could not know friendship as he was but a mechanical man, by definition not alive and therefore incapable of having any emotions. He had to be wound up to function and he was not programmed to feel at all.

Dot jumped quickly to the conclusion that the copper man was coming to reason with her, the rumor of her projected departure having swept the palace and reached him even before it was known to you or me, reader. Tik-Tok *was* programmed to hear and to think and the girl supposed that the idea of an impromptu departure by her did not jibe with his built-in equations as to received behavior on the part of Princesses of the Realm.

Oh, dear, a bore. Tik-Tok *could* be boring. On the other hand, it was often an advantage to have his admittedly keen intellect on one’s side. Then again, she reasoned, perhaps he was only in search of someone to wind him up. (This was in the days before the robot celebrity had had a self-winding mechanism installed in his right foot.<sup>§</sup>) Tickers was clever that way. He could sense when he was going to run down and would go to someone for first aid while time was.

“Tick, tock, tick, tock,” the noise went on. Queer, thought Dorothy. Tik-Tok didn’t usually tick that obtrusively. She used caution. She opened the door, just barely a crack, and peered out. “Tik-Tok, is that you?” The ticking came ever closer along the corridor.

She was about to step out, her dog close behind her. “I-I’m

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§ See *A Farewell to Oz*. (Editor’s note)

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just almost s-sure it's Tik-Tok, Toto. Aren't you ashamed of growling! It's just our d-dear old friend, probably c-come to join me on my t-travels." This was just whistling in the dark, to give *herself* courage.

Luckily just then the heroine thought of something. Anything! to delay the moment of encounter with whatever was ticking louder than Tik-Tok ever did. Dorothy had happened to remember the magic cap that enabled one to summon instantly the Winged Monkeys. She had seen it as she was packing. Actually she didn't know how it had got there but at the bottom of her green carpetbag she had found the magical cap not seen by her for nigh on a century. Heaven knew how many owners it had had in the interval. Somehow it had come at last into the possession of Queen Ozma who had herself not previously had a shot at its use. When she had had her turn at its fulfillment of three wishes (per owner), the 'sneaky' little potentate, forgetting that her Kansas friend had already made use of the Cap a hundred years before, secreted it in her chum's luggage. Now Dorothy wondered, panically, if just maybe she *might* invoke the monkeys one more time to help in the present doubtful situation.

But hark! along the green marble corridor everything was now quiet as far as the girl could hear. She took her courage in both hands and peeped out. "Yip! Yip!" came a loud bark behind her. Dorothy jumped—but carried on with her enterprise. Courageously she left her room and proceeded as far along the hall as a table bearing a green plant in a green vase. There was plenty of green to be seen all around but so far not any glint of red-brown copper.

At the first turning the girl's most horrid fears were realized. Out of the shadow appeared a nome. True, it did not resemble in the slightest the dreadful old Nome King or any of his minions. It was far more terrifying than such. On the other hand, it was a true nome, not a nome-by-courtesy-of-spelling only. It was a tall conical figure with hardly any limbs to speak of but with a nose that took precedence of everything else about it. This nose

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was long and thin as a symphony conductor's baton. At first glance it seemed as if it was broken because, to the accompaniment of the loud ticks and ticks, the organ swung from right to left and vice versa. The nome creature's head was in the shape of a rhombus, while piercing the long dangling nose was a triangular golden ring. What appeared as skin on the angular figure was revealed on closer inspection to be merely the swirling dark lines of polished mahogany. Dorothy was reminded of a dryad: half tree, half human.

In a trice it struck the girl what the nome resembled. Of course! At home in Kansas long ago just such a shape had stood on the top of the family's old upright piano. Oft had Dot herself played *Jingle Bells*<sup>s</sup> to the rhythmic beating of the metronome: a foot-tall shiny construction with a pendulum stick that measured the beat of the music, quickly or slow, however one regulated it.

"I see," breathed Dorothy with a sigh of recognition. "You are a metro nome."

"How-tic-did-tok-you-tic-know-tok-my-tic-name?" asked the nome, astonished. Wildly the girl wondered where the creature's voice box resided. Its ticks and tocks its nose supplied but where did the actual words come from?

"I don't know, s-sir," stammered Dot. "At least, I didn't know it was your *name*. But you are awfully like a metronome in appearance."

Metro Nome seemed to be half flattered, half disgusted. Impatiently he(?) flicked a switch on the side of his 'face' and the nose ceased to pendulate. "There; that's better. Yes, well, I am Metro Nome, the Metro nome, servant of his exalted majesty King Kaliko and supervisor of all metropolitan undertakings, in particular the laying of the tunnel for the projected metro system beneath the Emerald City."

"Tunnel!" gasped Dorothy. "There's no tunnel under E.C. The one old Roquat dug there an age ago was promptly filled in and sealed up by Her Grace, Princess Ozma."

"The tunnel has been restored!" cried Metro triumphantly.

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§ See *Dragons in Oz*. (Editor's note)

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"The digging, as you point out, was done long ago. It was just a question of removing the rubble in-fill; an easy matter." He laughed wickedly: a hollow wooden sound.

"Most reprehensible," declared Dorothy severely. "You'd better refill it quickly or you'll have Ozma to deal with again."

"We did already. Your Ozma has been well and truly dealt with." The nome laughed again hollowly at the same time as he reset his ticking mechanism. He had sensed that the noise distressed the frightened girl.

But Dorothy blustered on, picking up her little dog to give her the comfort of warm closeness: "You're lying! I left our beloved ruler in her throne room not half an hour ago. You couldn't have cleared the tunnel in that time—and there certainly wasn't a functioning tunnel down there while we were having lunch. At least... I don't think so..." She faltered to a stop, then irritated by the nome's constant noise burst out: "Shut off that terrible ticking, do! I can hardly make out what you say."

Metro obliged, not out of courtesy but rather as an aid to his own comprehensibility. He wanted the plucky girl to get what he said, and good. "With me in charge, keeping time over the gallery slaves, the work was accomplished in a week: right up to the level of the city gates. This morning I simply sped up the tempo. With me calling the strokes our trowel-handed nomes had the rest of the tunnel cleared right up to underneath the Palace of Magic here while you and your royal friend were at your meal."

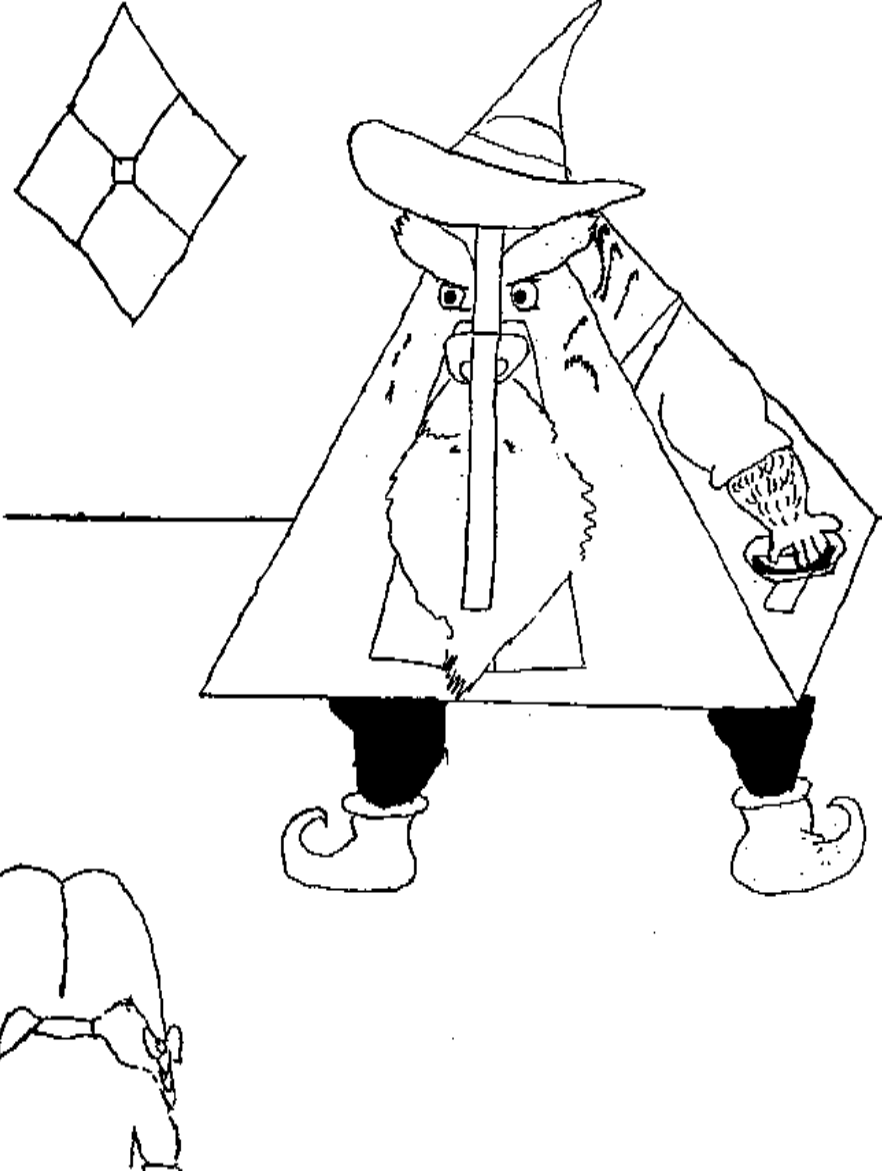
"How awful," exhaled Dorothy, as mystified as she was worried. "Trowel-handed nomes, metro nomes! What is nomedom coming to!? All the (g)nomes I've ever known were just grey, rather sour-faced, elves. Tiresome but at least looking like—well, nomes. How did you get like you are?"

"I've always looked this way. I wasn't around before I was created so can't describe the process. But you yourself recognized me as a metronome. I'm nothing out-of-the-way."

With this Metro flipped his switch again and the annoying tocking resumed. His long thin nose swayed as if moved by a

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sharp back-and-forth wind. Through it dangled his nose ring, giving him the dashing air of a pirate (or of a modest Hindu wife). "But-tic-to-tok-cases-tic! I-tok-do-tic-not-tok-have-tic-time-tok-for-tic-all-tok-this-tic-palaver-tok. I-tic-am-tok-on-tic-a-tok-strict-tic-schedule!" He lurched toward Dorothy.



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Quick as thought Toto leapt from his mistress's arms, clattered on all claws to the floor, and surged forward as if to bite Metro Nome. Just in time he reflected that he might damage his teeth, gnashing them against solid mahogany such as even the dog realized the strange nome was constructed of.

Another cautionary memory also came to the intelligent little pooch. How often, home on the range, had he heard Aunt Em warn: "Toto, you mustn't bite Ma Hog any! She's the sole support of her fourteen piglets—and where would we be, come slaughtering time, without them?" Mother Hog was suffered to remain comfortably unbiten, and Toto remembered his lesson to his advantage now. Incidentally, Ma Hog was later transported to Oz by a benevolent Princess Ozma and still wallowed supreme in the Kansas farm couple's sty. And Toto still never bit Ma Hog any.

Dorothy looked around for succor in this tight pinch. Retreating fast to her bedroom door she glanced inside where she caught sight of the basin where she had just washed her face. Water! Witch-Exterminator to the Court of Oz Dorothy Gale inevitably always thought first of water when confronting dangers. But shucks: if she threw water over Metro Nome (and he let it stay there a day or two) the only result might be to warp his wooden body. The creature's mind was already warped enough; let her not add to the problem. As for 'putting him out,' Dorothy knew water only worked on witches.

"Please, sir," she begged. "Princess Ozma can help you. I'm sure you must have some unfulfilled wish. Please..."

Metro Nome's only reply was to lean out of the nearest hall window and shout, "Catch-tic-her-tok, fellows!" He maneuvered the terrified girl into the embrasure, then without more ado pressed his bottom-heavy form against her, toppling her over the sill. Toto, not to be left out of the adventure, sprang to the open window and followed her.

Dorothy screamed. Oh, how she screamed. She knew she wasn't in Wonderland and likely to fall slowly like Alice. She also wasn't underground and descending leisurely as she had

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done once when buoyed up by the canvas canopy of a horse-drawn buggy.<sup>§</sup> She fell now fast and ever faster (until she got up to Galileo's average speed for falling bodies). Of course she wouldn't be killed when she struck, but how much fun would it be lying a cripple in the Palace infirmary for months on end?

She only had to fall three storeys but oh, how long it seemed to take. Her skirts billowed out like Marilyn Monroe's and flew up over her head. She covered her face with her hands. If she could not prevent her nether limbs from being exposed, at least she could conceal who she was. The wind whistled through her blond locks and she braced herself for impact. Gosh, this was the most she'd fallen since 1906 when she dropped through the earthquake.

The ticking and ticking was still audible from up above and the sounds seemed to command the efforts of yet another tribe of nomes. These were the celebrated Pillow Nomes, whose arms looked like Popeye's, being composed of sturdy well-stuffed cushions. A group of the creatures threw themselves forward with arms outstretched, making up a nice round padded area onto which Dot fell *SPLA-DAPP*, to find herself not a mite the worse for her dramatic descent. Toto landed beside her.

The Pillow Nomes lingered only to take the briefest of bows after their life-saving action, then they plunged as one into a convenient hole in the ground, leaving behind on the air a few wafting feathers dislodged from splitting seams by the heavy fall of the girl.

After catching her breath and checking to confirm that her dog was unharmed Dorothy took a moment to consider how odd it was that a great gaping chasm existed among the shrubbery and lawns just under the palace walls. Even as she looked a further large area of grass and flowers sank out of sight. Without hesitation Dot turned and dashed at top speed in an opposite direction, Toto hot on her heels. All around she could hear rumblings and crashings. An earthquake! Goodness, everything

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§ the note is missing although of course Oz enthusiasts know what the reference is to. TEAMLOAD editor.



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today was conspiring to remind her of her sub-California experiences of so long ago. By common consensus that adventure of hers (and the Wizard's, Eureka the kitten's, etc.) had been the gloomiest of her entire career. She hoped sincerely she was not going to have another such now.

Rapidly she raced. Others were refugeeing west too and Dorothy hoped she wasn't going to have to knock anyone over in order to be first out of the city gates. The collapsing Emerald City did seem to be taking its time about it. Perhaps it was finding that there wasn't room underground for all of it comfortably. It obviously couldn't all go in the new subway. Dot found herself scarcely winded when, after twenty-five minutes, she cleared the west portal and scampered to the top of a knoll to survey the damage.

The entire capital of Oz had sunk beneath the level of the earth! Dorothy gave a sob, thinking of Queen Ozma, Betsy, Trot, and all that bunch who now undoubtedly lay crushed under collapsing masonry. Dabbing at her eyes, the girl took note of an especially large and brilliant emerald atop the tallest city tower as that structure, as last of all, sank out of sight. Just one voice, sounding like that of an elderly person, was heard to cry "He-e-elp!" as all descended into the abyss.

Curiously, the girl survivor had the impression that that voice was of the great city itself speaking! Horrors: had her wish to hear the town talk come true in this most dreadful fashion? Never would Dorothy have used wishing pills or a magic belt to bring about any such catastrophe. Piously she acquitted herself of any blame. But what could be the cause of the holocaust? Inevitably the event was connected in her mind with the mooted rehabilitation of the nomes' tunnel. But that couldn't have made the entire city sink!

She was going to have to go on a quest to find out what had happened and why. Anyway, she had her long longed-for adventure before her—in spades.

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## C H A P T E R     T H R E E

At first Dorothy just sat on the grassy knoll and looked toward the great gaping Emerald Hole of Oz. Curiously, draughts from the crater bore constantly aloft scattered clouds of feathers. There must have been more Pillow Nomes (or poultry) down there than the girl had reckoned with and the city's falling stones and bricks had crushed and torn great numbers of them.

The Kansas princess, ever the tidy one, rose and went about gathering up handfuls of the feathers. If you are going to have a hole for a national capital, at least let it be a neat hole. But now where to dispose of her gleanings? All the public waste bins of the city were now under ground. With no place else to put them, Dot stuffed her various pockets with the feathers, she filled out her sleeves with them, plumped her bodice, and even gave herself a permanent traveling pillow to sit on. She sat down again, to test for comfort.

Dorothy was in (delayed) shock. She was disdraught. How shocking it was to have one's home and home-town both disappear, amid screams, down a dark hole. It was an adventure for sure and memorable to boot, even if one might prefer *not* to remember it. Even above the recollection of the shrieks of the collapsing capital, through Dorothy's mind echoed the ticking

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and the ticking of the fell Metronome. Tick, it had sounded—and tock. And then there had been the rumbling and the screaming.

But not buzzing. Louder than mere remembered rumble-tick-screams Dorothy now heard a buzzing, even a tiny shouting. Toto heard it too, probably first; he turned his head from side to side as if his ears were tickled.

Now the girl could see things too. Teensy-weensy placards moved through the air before her eyes. They bore legends like “Don’t be smug; be a bug;” “Wogglebug College Flies Protest;” “We tickle your fancy, not your moustache;” “False alarm: E.C. Palace soldier cleared of muscacide charges;” “Nous sanifestons pour une vie décente, une veillesse heureuse!”

Then the tiny signs were wafted aside as up the green knoll came striding the renowned Highly Magnified Wogglebug, T.E., as soignély turned out in his best suit as if he had not been summoned in all haste by the disgruntled Green Fly. Highly was a tall black insect with a way of projecting his personality nicely, ever since the day when he himself had been projected by a magic lantern upon a schoolroom screen, off which he presently stepped as live as you please and had so remained. He peered now at Dorothy with large unmoving eyes.

“Princess Dorothy,” he reprimanded, for all the world as if a capital city did not lie in ruins at the bottom of a vast hole nearby, “you have made statements as high-handed as those of the notorious dame who said of starving millions, ‘Let them eat crumbs!’ That was Marie Ant Oinette of ill repute, Queen of Ant Arctica, way down beneath the Southern Cross—though a poor doomed insect to boot. Of her it was said, when her formic remains were found: ‘Amid this a mouldering garter enabled them to recognize that the handful of pale dust which was disinterred from the damp soil was the last trace of that long-dead ant who in her day had been the goddess of grace and of taste, and subsequently the queen of many sorrows’.” (The Professor was just showing off his learning.)

“You yourself,” he went on, “are of the nobility, nay even

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royalty, being a created princess in your own right. Yet flies have died and you have shrugged. I hope you may not live to pay for your sin as grievously as did poor Marie Ant."

Dorothy started to her feet shamefastly. "Professor Wogglebug, sir, I—There has been a misunderstanding. Those palace flies that were thought to be dead live yet—or, I should say, again. Ozma revived them! Why, one of these little signs itself says so." Here Dorothy indicated the swarm of varicolored flies who accompanied the eminent gentlebug and had been displaying their slogans.

"Scientifically impossible," dismissed the Wogglebug, imperious to what his supporters might be claiming.

"They are alive," insisted Dorothy.

"Then where are they, pray?"

"Well, in the Emerald City, the last I saw. They may be there yet." Not yet even having had sufficient time to grieve over her probably entombed friends in the Palace, Dorothy was now having to affect concern over the fate of some buried flies.

"The Emerald City is missing," announced H.M.

"Exactly."

"All maps, charts, and guide books shelved in the libraries of Wogglebug University indicate that the capital of Oz lies here. But where is it? I ask you."

"Down there!" cried Dot in exasperation. "See that big hole in the ground about the size of three counties? No, more to your right! There. See? That's where E.C. used to be."

The learned one thought for a moment. "But say," he entreated, "what force could be so devastating as to wipe out a whole city? and such a good one at that."

"The fell Metro Nome," declared Dorothy, "has much to answer for. He's one of the Nome King's servitors, you know, and was in charge of putting in a metro system under the city. And yet I'm not sure that he alone was responsible. Also, the city has perhaps not been so much wiped out as just drawn down into that hole."

The Wogglebug jumped to a perfectly unwarranted conclu-

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sion. "So King Kaliko has used the Powder of Life on the whole great city?"

"Of course not," dismissed Dot. "The Nome King hasn't got any Life Powder. All of that belongs to Princess Ozma. She was just telling me at luncheon where she keeps a lifetime supply of it. In fact, I was planning to set out and go seek the cavern where it's stored..." But the girl hesitated. "And yet... I did have the impression—just at the last, you know—that the City was speaking, or rather, screaming—to me. Almost as if it *had* in some mystical way gained the gift of life. Just as it was dying, that is."

While this colloquy was going on Highly's attendants, the flies, having dropped their protest placards on the lawn, were buzzing in and out of the Metro hole. Among these was that same Green Fly who had crossed verbal swords with the princess earlier. Now he flew nigh and hovered at attention, saying, "There are ruts in the cavern below."

"I'll bet there are," confirmed Dorothy. "Ruts and then some. About how many, would you reckon?"

"That I don't know," told the fly. "But they're deep! Like the ones you'll have noted on country roads when you, Princess, and your family have gone for a drive in the Red Wagon with the Sawhorse pulling, over muddy lanes in the rain. Really deep." The fly again produced his bedsheet handkerchief and mopped his wide brow after the exertion of his tour of inspection. That done, he brought from his back pocket a tiny fold of paper extracted from a notebook. It fell open in four leaves.

"Well done, Clover," commended the Professor. "Clover's one of our cleverer students," he informed Dorothy. "We call him 'Four-Leaf Clover' as he's never without his pages from his notebook. He takes notes about everything of importance. What more have you to reveal, Clover?"

"Well, just about the ruts. I—we" Here Clover had reference to his companions, the varicolored flies from, presumably, the varicolored regions of Oz. "—think those ruts are the key to the situation."

"Don't you think, professor," asked the Kansas girl, "we

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should go down there and try to find out what caused the ruts? You're sure, by the way," — she turned again to Clover — "they're really truly ruts?"

"Not a doubt of it, madam," assured the fly.

"Oh, we don't want to get stuck in a rut," dismissed the Wogglebug jocularly. "Anyway, insects under ground? We're winged; we want to fly high, not crawl around in holes, even if, by accident of birth, some of us hatch out of earth-covered cocoons.

"No, let's fly above the course of this tunnel you speak of. Somewhere that way lies, I feel, the solution to the mystery."

"But how are we going to be able to tell which way the tunnel runs?" protested Dorothy. "There's nothing to see on the surface of the earth — not like mole hills or such."

"Oh, I possess special radar equipment," explained the Wogglebug, "donated once by our good Wizard Diggs to the physics laboratory at W.U. Beaming that down we should be able to discern the path of the tunnel as by a magic eye."

"And then," further objected Dot, "I don't have wings. Are you all going to fly off without me?"

"Oh, we wouldn't like to do that! You're the leading lady in this whole affair. We shall perform merely as your escorts."

With that, H.M. blew upon a whistle, which proved the signal for red, yellow, and blue flies to wheel forward a tiny metal cart that had appeared from nowhere. With a flourish the tall insect pulled away a concealing cloth, revealing a strange little apparatus. "This is a reverse magic lantern. It doesn't enlarge objects but makes them appear minute. One beam from it and you'll be no bigger than a fly and thus easily carriable by other flies as we make our way airborne about Oz."

"That sounds exciting," agreed Dorothy. "What do I have to do?"

"Position yourself under the magic lantern."

"Are you kidding? It's no bigger than a sugar cube. How am great gross I going to get 'under' that?"

"Hm," reflected the Wogglebug, belatedly given furiously

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to think. "I dare say you could hold it over your head. But no. When I turned it on it would suddenly be huge in relation to your reduced size. It could fall on you and crush you."

"Thanks very much," laughed Dot. "I've already escaped from one crushing today. I don't think I'll chance it again."

The professor resumed wear of his thinking cap. Finally, "I know," he announced. "We'll wheel the apparatus up on this stiff acanthus leaf. Now if you lie down with your head under the leaf's overhang—there's plenty of room—we'll beam the rays at your head. That ought to do it—and the machine can't fall."

All went as planned—oh, except for one thing: as Dorothy lay on a blanket of green grass the magic lantern somehow got confused and produced a teeny weeny Dorothy, grass green in hue! That was Oz science!

"Professor, I'm gree-en," wailed our heroine.

"I think you are at that," agreed the educator. "Not to worry. We'll fix that soon enough."

But soon enough was too late for Dorothy. "Oh, never mind," she dismissed. "Let's get on with this show. Anyway, I rather fancy being all Kelly-colored—for a while at least. Let us be off."

At that two of the escort flies picked up the tiny green Dorothy and settled her between them on their shoulders and made ready to lift off in close formation. Meanwhile H.M. Wogglebug also crawled under the minifying machine and made himself of a size with his companions. All was in readiness. Suddenly Dorothy shrieked. "Toto!! I forgot all about him! Where, oh where has my little dog gone?!"

And in good time here came the panting pooch. "Toto, you naughty thing. Why did you give me such a fright?"

Toto vouchsafed no reply. He had his own motivations. It was the mention of the Sawhorse that had done it. Reminded of his stablemate Toto had known regret and longing. The Sawhorse must lie, with all the others, amid the wreckage of the Palace of Magic down in that great big hole in the ground. Toto had crept sniffing off down into the hole to see what he could see. It hadn't been long, however, before he found his way

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blocked by a vast scree of rocks and earth. One little dog could accomplish nothing in the way of digging through that enormous barrier to seek his friends. Sadly he returned to his mistress—just in time not to get left behind.

Now the Wogglebug put on his radar glasses. These were really a sort of goggles and covered most of his head. The great lenses were covered with swirly lines. Gazing through them the insect declared that he could easily make out the famous “ruts”. Presumably the ruts marked the course of the nome tunnel.

At last the assembled party soared off into the sky. Dorothy looked up into the wide blue yonder and dreamed how she would make her wish (for a talking town) come untrue. The professor meanwhile kept his goggled eyes glued to the ground; he was navigator and mustn't miss a turn in the trail of the subterranean ruts. They flew off to the northwest.



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

The trip went well at first. They flew over the (underground) village of the field mice. Neither the Mouse Queen nor any of her subjects could be distinguished from the altitude at which they flew. Farther on they spied the old castle of the Wicked Witch of the West, now long since the capitol of Emperor Nick Chopper. It seemed Dorothy was continually to be reminded today of her former prowess with a bucket of water. With a little sigh Dot cast her mind back to that time a century before. She had been only a child then. She was also only a child now. A hundred years had taught her a lot but aged her scarcely at all. The girl realized that it was her eternal youth that made her still so eager for adventure. She was glad she never grew up; what adults were ever so anxious for adventures as children?!

Winkies, though distant, loomed large enough to be seen. Some in their yellow attire who were working in the fields waved at the speck-size airborne travelers. The husbandmen were harvesting sunflowers for the seed crop. Astonishingly, others were picking daffodils. Only in Oz do spring and autumn flowers bloom simultaneously! The landscape was of course mostly yellow. The yellow fly who was of their party was seized by a sudden yen to steep himself in his home color and he swooped close to the ground. Dorothy had to praise herself silently that she

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wasn't riding with the yellow fly. Roller-coaster-like loop-de-loops were not exactly her favorite thing. They were so scary! Still, one had to concede that the Winkie fly, though yellow in color, was not yellow by temperament.

Prof. Wogglebug, however, *was* flying tandem with the yellow one. After long years of disuse his wings were not a patch on those of flies for air-navigability. He could manage *pretty* well but preferred to fly arm-in-arm with one of the more practised aeronauts. But when Sunnodil chose to nose-dive, H.M. let go and floundered along on his own. "Could you please stop that juvenile behavior?" he scolded when the yellow fly rejoined the formation.

"I haven't been home all semester," excused Sunnodil. "I've missed it."

"Perhaps you should stay home all the time and take your courses by correspondence," suggested the Wogglebug.

"But that way I couldn't play pumpkin-ball with the fellows!" pointed out the fly.

Pumpkin-ball was a native Oz sport (banned only in the pumpkin patch of Jack Pumpkinhead) in which players, most often Winkies, in whose domain the yellowy-orange vegetables were more assiduously grown than in some other parts of Oz, kicked a live pumpkin around until it burst. That would be the signal for the players to fall upon the vegetable and scoop out its seeds for toasting, while the flesh would be hustled to kitchens and turned into pies. Pumpkin soup was a favorite of theirs as well. It isn't bad. Here's the recipe:

Warm a Quart of milk (buttermilk will also serve) over low heat. Knead together 2 tablespoons of butter and one third of a cup of flour and drop in pea-size bits into the hot milk, beating well each time. When the mixture is thickened and smooth, stir in 2 cups of cooked well-drained pumpkin, 2 tablespoons of minced parsley, fresh-ground pepper, and half a teaspoon of ground nutmeg with, optionally, a dash of vinegar. Cook, stirring, until the soup is thoroughly thickened and piping hot.

Jack Pumpkinhead, for once playing the old meanie, had

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decreed that only “non-alive” pumpkins might be used in the game of pumpkin-ball. But who was to decide whether a given pumpkin was alive or not? Once the vegetable had been detached from its stem it was no longer growing, but the seeds inside could go on to give birth to other pumpkins even years down the line. No one took Jack’s prohibition very seriously.

The Winkie flies had always had to stand on the sidelines looking on enviously when the human Winkies played at the game. Then their genial dean had had the bright idea of shrinking, under his minifier, fresh pumpkins down to fly size. Pumpkinball had immediately become the favorite sport of Sunnodil and his peers. Now the Wogglebug could only mutter peevishly: “Pumpkin-ball! Pfft! It’s all you ever think about. I’m almost sorry I spent time bringing it within your range of activities. Now you flies would rather play ball than study.”

Sunnodil just laughed.

The flying party passed over a road, then up ahead could begin to make out the sparkling yellow waters of the Winkie River. Before they could reach it, however, black clouds formed around them.

“I declare,” said Dorothy, “the clouds were just about that black the time the tornado blew me out of Kansas into here.”

“A tornado!... in Oz! Impossible,” expostulated the professor—which was disappointing, as we had come to believe that Oz was the land where anything was possible. And yet he was right. The Anti-Natural-Disaster Act promulgated long since by wise Ozma outlawed any natural upheavals in Oz that might seriously threaten life or limb. As for “Acts of God”, those were unknown in Oz.

Somehow the flies sensed what the threat was with which the party now was faced. “Tar!” they screamed.

Yes, big globs of molten tar were being hurled into the sky. So sticky were they that they stuck to the very air itself and hence were seen to be hovering and dripping before they continued their parabolas back to earth. To flies all viscid substances were anathema and among such tar not least.

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“What in tarnation?” said Dorothy mildly, peering down with interest. Exactly: it was the Tar Nation with which they were making acquaintance. A huge wooden sign on the ground was seen to carry the following injunction: “TAR NATION. DON’T STICK AROUND”. This seemed a slight contradiction in terms. What could one do, all willy-nilly, but stick if one had the misfortune to find oneself in the locality? Gazing with fascination Dot saw, basking in the hot Yellow Winkie sun, a gooey black castle and gummy black houses. What roads and paths there were, crisscrossing the black landscape, were of course tar-topped. The pungent odor of boiling, or merely sun-warmed, tar rose easily the hundred feet to where the group of aeronauts hung suspended. In fact, it was a rather appealing odor, at least those elements of it which resembled the tar used for weather-calking buildings in ancient Norway. It smelled just like an emphatic barbecue.

But what was it that made the tar fly into the (almost) stratosphere in that fashion? Now Dorothy made out, just at the edge of a wood of black alders, black gums, black spruce, blackthorns, and black walnut trees a row of huge catapults whose strong tar cords were being controlled by dreadful black dripping creatures (themselves born of tar, if the truth be told). Though black as charcoal, the beings gleamed like onyx. These must be the Tartars. And round their feet played their tar babies.

“This is a sticky situation indeed,” commented Highly. “I don’t have any idea what to do.”

Dorothy was bolder. “Let me land,” she urged. “I have an idea.”

Even the audacious green fly, Clover, was dubious. “Are you sure? You don’t know what you may get stuck with.”

Dot reminisced suddenly. “I remember the ancient railroad station back in Kansas. It was built of logs and they used tar to seal them.”

The fly thought the princess’ mind must be wandering, no doubt because secretly she was terrified by the present contretemps. He muttered something contemptuous about “Ameri-

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can nonsense.”

Dorothy’s wish prevailed. She got her fly bearers to land her at some little distance to the right of the diminutive Tar Nation. As she descended she could make out now a vast cauldron of bubbling tar that seemed to be the centerpiece of the adhesive little country. It looked to be the wellspring of all that was best and blackest in the Tar Nation. Tar filled the great pot to the brim and ever and anon as it boiled a great dollop would spill over the side and quickly firm up into a new tar being. To Dorothy it all looked like something a malevolent witch might have dreamed up on a particularly ornery day. In fact, she may well have been right, the Tar Nation being the inadvertent result of a spell gone wrong.

The natives were distinctly not friendly. When some of them caught sight of the young green girl as she landed they made their viscous way toward her, slinging aloft tarry arms from which blackness oozed and dropped: something the way we picture ghosts appearing, only black. Dorothy stood still and let them come. There didn’t seem much to fear, the creatures’ movements were so slow, rather like that of molasses in January.

As they slugged forward the Tartars chanted:

“We are the Lords of Tar Nation.

To tar you is our avocation.

So don’t come too far,

Whoever you are,

Unless you desire to be tainted

And end up as black as we’re painted.”

Did Dorothy tremble? Did she blench? No, no! The tar edged inch by inch and still the doughty girl stood her ground. Such did not the Wogglebug and the other insects. Those cowardly custards remained airborne, hovering a good six feet out of harm’s way. Dot was insouciant. She didn’t mind if her friends were craven. She had the image of dauntless warriors of old, namely the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, to inspire her. She brought to mind their words as they went into combat with wolves and crows. “This is my fight,” she echoed them. “This is

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my battle. I will meet them as they come" —though whether the oncoming surge of tar could be thought of as singular or plural was not quite clear.

Onward flowed the Tartars. It seemed to take hours. Finally, to shorten the odds, Dot stepped forward boldly, reached into her pockets, bodice, and bloomers, seized out huge handfuls of Pillow Nome feathers, and flung them. The tar people laughed to see such sport—but only for a moment. All too soon the flying white feathers had alighted on the oozing black beings and the whole crowd were seized with fits of sneezing. Wildly they looked round for a rail to ride out of town on but finding none they turned aside and seeped as swiftly as they might toward the nearby Winkie River, there to immerse themselves, harden their body substance, and insure that the decorative feathers nevermore leave them.

The hovering flies jeered. "It serves you right!" they crowed—or rather, 'flied'—"trying to tar pretty little bright-hued creatures with the same brush as yourselves!": an unjust accusation, as brushes had not been employed.

Unaware of their comrades' fate, further Tartars continued to boil out of the cauldron and make slow haste to follow them. Their unmotivated animosity to visitors reminded Dorothy of the Hammer-Heads of unholy memory. Ah, well, the malevolence of the Tar Nation was strictly circumscribed by the extreme slowness of the creatures' means of advance. They could never present much of a threat to other Oz municipalities. One tolerated and passed on, mused Dot. "Come on. Let's get out of here," she urged, taking her seat once more upon fly shoulders.

The delegation soared aloft again in victory flight. Mentally Princess Dorothy buffed her nails on her lapel. This was more like it. The little triumph made her feel that things—and Oz—were getting back to how they used to be.

## C H A P T E R F I V E

Flying high above the Winkie River Dorothy and her friends could admire how the black congealed lumps-of-tar people contrasted charmingly with the yellow waters as they floated steerless down stream. The party followed the stream upward for a time until they came upon a large river island partly overgrown with forest. Vines stretched high up the trees, which, the girl presently recognized with pleasure, were the fabled banana-cream-pie trees. There was something about them that made her think of elephants. Of course: it was the shape of the huge ear-like leaves; also, she could hear the trunks trumpeting loudly.

As if expecting flying visitors a large sign atop one of the tallest trees declared:

“JUNGLE-LIE-HA. All are welcome here.”

That was a pleasant change from the Tar Nation and the Wogglebug glanced aside to Dorothy to see what she might think of paying a call. Dot nodded, whereupon the party descended. All were conscious of pangs of hunger by now, they had eaten nothing since starting out, and the prospect of a nourishing wallow in a creamy ripe pie appealed to them all. They recalled fondly the old adage:

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“Never take the chance of swatting a fly  
On the surface of any banana cream pie!”

They hoped this exhortation was strictly enforced in Jungle-Lie-Ha.

The inhabitants of the new country soon appeared to be a sort of cicadas, creatures clothed in colors like those of brown beans, red tomatoes, white rice, and green okra, all of which were delicious ingredients of a recipe the Kansas girl remembered from her aunt’s cookbook and whose taste she recalled fondly from the several times Aunt Em had served jambalaya. After all Kansas was only two states away from Louisiana and practitioners of Cajun cooking had penetrated that far to the northwest. Dorothy forgot about cream pies and began to anticipate, just possibly, something more substantial from this island bayou culture.

True to their welcome slogan the local cicadas invited the insect aeronauts to join their revels. There seemed to be singing and dancing going on non-stop. Muted trumpets were heard playing in close harmony with reggae drums. And just like at Mardi Gras everyone was wearing a mask, though the brown ones of the cicadas struck the newcomers as looking like they were just about to peel off.

There was feasting too. The Jungle-Lie-Hans fed their visitors delicious spiced bananas (though curiously not banana cream pie) and an ethnic dish of coconut and Cajun rice. But Dorothy protested. “Hey, where’s the jambalaya?” she demanded a little rudely. “We come all the way here and then don’t get your national dish?”

“Sure not,” chirped the Chief Cicada. “This is Thursday. Jambalaya is served Saturdays.”

“Oh-h,” sighed Dot.

“Sorry to disappoint you, miss,” went on the Chief. “but as for national dishes, they don’t eat turkey in Turkey every day nor Danish in Denmark or French fries in France, while the people of Athens are not on a steady diet of grease. But stay over a couple of days, do! Then you’ll get your treat.”



## THE TALKING CITY OF OZ

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All this time the music had rumbled on. Abruptly it ceased. It was the signal! "Masks off!" commanded the Chief Cicada, as he clambered up a tree to a lookout spot on a low limb. His smiling brown mask seemed to detach itself of itself and slip away.

The command was repeated directly to the somewhat aghast Dorothy and her companions. "Off with your masks now!"

Dot chose to act offended. "We aren't wearing masks," she informed.

The Chief took no notice. "All must remove their masks at the stroke of four o'clock," he stated. "It's the rule of the Carnival." (Unlike with the serving of the national dish, it would appear that it *was* carnival time every day in Jungle-Lie-Ha.) All the citizen cicadas looked on expectantly, perhaps wondering what sort of droll visages Dorothy and party would reveal underneath their vizards.

Prof. Wogglebug explained: "We, alas, do not possess removable skins. Indeed, as far as I am aware, you good people wear the only vizards of Oz."

"You make a mistake," returned the Chief. "No more than you do we have removable skins. These are true masks or, perhaps rather, dominoes: all-over masks covering the entire body: a cocoon-like carapace, such as all wear at carnival time."

The visitors saw that by now all the Jungle-Lie-Hans had stepped out of their cicada costumes and blossomed forth as flamboyant cockatoos. Now the creatures reminded Dorothy of another Oz folk: those who inhabited outwardly drab houses whose interiors were gorgeously decorated. The Jungle-Lie-Hans, as in New Orleans in February, put on grotesque, or anyway homely, costumes, only to reveal brilliant plumage when the witching hour came. Freed of the narrow restraints of their costumes, the birds were plumping out and preening their feathers en masse.

Then abruptly, like a flock of starlings, they all rose in the air and flapped away among the treetops.

"A strange performance," commented Dorothy. As she

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glanced at her fly companions, Clover and Sunnodil, she observed that they seemed to have got in the carnival spirit at last. Their colored bodies appeared to be turning brown. Could it just be sunburn? But the afternoon sun was not that penetrating and besides the flies had been out in the sun all day without changing hue.

Help!! It came to the seasoned little adventuress as in a dream: Jungle-Lie-Ha was enchanted! Everyone who spent time there would eventually grow an all-over "mask", which subsequently would shrivel and peel and then you would stand revealed as quite another sort of creature. Who knew what her fly friends and herself might become? Aardvarks? Minnows? Unicorns?

Better to take no chances. "Up! Up! Away!" the girl commanded. As she rose swiftly into the sunset sky upon the shoulders of her bearers she confided to them her suspicions. They all breathed a sigh of relief at having escaped all in (their same) one piece.

