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

Those two birds were experienced, or educated, or both, enough to know that an object suspended in a medium, whether water or gas or air, within a falling container will suffer marginally less from impact shock than the vessel itself. That's why they flapped about madly inside the plunging dragon's cabin rather than clinging to any perch.

Even so, momentum and inertia caught up with them, they were flung against a couple of the padded "crash straps", and were stunned when the vast collapsed bag flowed out over the stony tundra. But yet again; they were the least stunned of Oyhho II's twelve passengers. It fell to them to pick themselves up, dust themselves off, and start all over again, constating that the good-luck charms they wore round their necks had indeed done their business. Then they fluttered to the unconscious people in the cocoons and with squawks and peckings tried to wrest from them signs of life.

Ojo the Lucky was the first to respond. "Ouunhh, " he groaned and informed them that he ached in a hundred places.

"That's okay. At least you're in shape to tell us you ache," barked the crow. "What about the others? "

One virtue of the nature of the great dirigible was that there was no other feasible position for the crashed passenger cabin

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to land in than horizontal to the ground. No one in a cocoon was hanging upside-down or suspended from a “ceiling”. The shattering effect of the near-pancake landing plus the considerable weight of the mighty tinfoil bag had crushed the roof of the cabin down to about four feet from the floor. It was the grim duty of the three restored survivors to check that none of the others had got broken necks.

No, the battery of protective devices Fairy Ozma and Sorceress Glinda had caused to be sent along with the expeditionaries demonstrated their efficacy. Everybody was just having a restorative swoon after the trials of recent hours and responded eventually to fervent suits that they look lively and get themselves out of the entangling wreckage and away. The Russkis would be there any minute

The two navigators’ efforts to ‘nose-dive’ the craft may perhaps have succeeded partially. When on hands and knees the men reached the shattered observation windows and crawled out into the silvery-black wilderness of heaped mountains of leaf tin, they were astonished to see pinpoints of light coming through here and there; nor did there seem to be any serious lack of air. The castaways applied their machetes at those light-allowing places in the fabric and hacked stoutly. The light sources increased in luster. Even as murky a day as they knew awaited them outside was sufficient to send vagrant grey beams into their tinfoil prison.

A final upward-stretched hack of his machete and Henk saw daylight outside. The crowd dropped everything and began to clamber upwards through the ever collapsing roil of tin. The cries were ear-creasing, the people in their alarm and eagerness crying as loud as the tin.

After Mr Baum’s revelation in the first book of the original testament that Oz people, especially Munchkins, were no bigger than a six-to-eight-year-old Kansas girl, the concept seemed to get forgotten. Indeed, already in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* itself both the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow are pictured as taller than Dorothy. Even sitting down Nick Chopper is as tall

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as she is! Ever afterward Ozites were allowed to be as big as average outer-world people .

Not so with the denizens of Volkovian Oz. They all remained diminutive, with the result that Lestar and his alternate-Oz compatriots aboard the flight of the dragon were all a good head or so shorter than their Winkie fellow passengers. That's how it happened that they had to be helped with boosts and pulls by the latter to climb up out of the wreckage.

At last the castaways stood upon the wildly screeching surface of the collapsed mountain of thin tin. The noise was not music to their ears and they made haste to leap away and down off the mass. Still no blessed respite from noise supervened, for now, far away, they could hear a hollow booming like bazookas going off. Then there was the sharp rattle of machine-gun fire. The refugees looked at each other with wide-staring eyes.

By common consent, to a man, and with very little talk they set off loping over the black-purple-brown tundra toward some small white clapboard buildings in the east.

"Where have the planes gone?" wondered Jinjur aloud. "I can't believe how easy this is turning out to be."

It's never a good idea to praise your luck 'til you're safe home. Ms Jinjur learned this again now. For now for the first time they not only heard but saw the signs of warfare. Out of the southwest a Jeep (or Russian equivalent) came jouncing and wallowing across the near-permafrost as fast as it could go.

The riders in the vehicle had no need to menace with their rifles. The luckless castaways from the dragon all had their hands in the air by the time the car drew up close to them. Voices barked commands in Russian that were understood by nobody but the crow Kaggi-Karr and Lestar and his artisans.

With the guns in their backs the Ozites were made to stumble away back in the direction of the fallen dirigible. The Jeep followed close, at a snail's pace. None of the captors were ornithologists nor stopped to think how odd it was that a robin and a crow should be objects found in nature on the north shore of Little Diomedé island. No one paid any attention when, after

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some hurried twittering between themselves, the birds flew away in the opposite direction.

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“Oh, no! not parallel to the wall. We want that counter canted out - like so...!” Ms Mulroony herself gave the stand a series of sharp shoves and it grudgingly moved around to a position in which one end ran toward the wall at a 45-degree angle. “And that one with the opposite corner nearer the wall, like on T.V. panels, you know.”

She stepped back to survey the effect, then her attention was caught by the behavior of a paper hanger. “No, no!” she shrieked. “My dear *man!*... Yank it down quick, before the glue starts to dry. The stripes are to be vertical, not horizontal! What in the world would that look like? The ceiling’s low enough as it is. The place isn’t supposed to look like a dungeon! “

Monique was overseeing the outfitting of her new travel boutique, “Touch and Go”, in a very favorable corner location in the heart of downtown Portland. The other girls looked on. They were to be counter attendants in the new enterprise. To a woman they agreed this was going to be a much more fun way of life.

All but Cindy Lou, of course. She had moved on to greener (actually, blue) pastures. It came about in this way: As soon as they reached Portland Ms Mulroony had gone into deep conference with herself. She sent her three companions out on

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the streets the while. Monique felt she was on Easy Street from here on out, thanks to the emerald box which she could flog for a cool million. But more engrossing to her mind was the matched set of ring and—‘pendant’, she supposed you’d call it—which she had succeeded in abstracting from the magic casket that moment in the tunnel.

It was only when she got by herself in the Portland hotel room that she had time to investigate thoroughly the stolen charm. It was a little rectangle of some unidentifiable substance (like black ivory, she thought) in a pouch of rough velvet. Intaglioed in the “ivory” square were spaces that just fitted a silver ring and a flat metal object like a Phi Beta Kappa (though Monique wasn’t to know that) key. Imprinted on the back of the square in pink letters was an instruction; “Wear the ring, wish the traveler to Oz, rub the key, and repeat ‘Pryzxql’.”

Ms Mulroony let herself play with that concept a long time. She soon realized that what she had there was the very same sort of device that rube had used to transport herself into the presence of that fairy queen. Here was the answer to her prayers! She would be off to Oz at once and never leave it again.

Before she could carry her decision into effect she had second thoughts. There was an aura of *déjà vu* about the plan. So she wished herself into Ozma’s presence for a second time. So what? Would the fairy not promptly whisk her back to America once more? and with a flea in her ear—as well, no doubt, as having relieved her of the magic trick. Besides, it was a waste of the magic: once in Oz she could have no more use of a device for wishing oneself to Oz.

What could she do with the charm that might be to her more long-lasting advantage? she pondered. Then she had the bright idea of opening a travel bureau! With absolutely no outlay of cash or exertion by herself, she could provide customers with the vacation of a lifetime! “Two weeks in Oz”! Was there any American living who wouldn’t grab at that chance if he could? Within moments she had her plans almost fully hatched.

So the Ozma person would be a bit miffed if wish-loads of

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trippers started turning up in the Emerald City. Well, Monique thought she could count on the fairy princess' being amiable enough not just to return every arrival with a jolt to where he came from but would surely lay on a little guided tour or two first. It was no sweat for Ozma, using her magic, to wish everyone home again when the time came. All at no cost to Ms Mulroony.

First though she'd need a guinea pig. She must try out the amulet and see if it really worked. Luckily she had caught, at the time of her own translation, Forrest Sawyer's pronunciation of the magic word. She called in Cindy Lou, who experience led her to believe was the most suggestible of her troupe of girls.

"Cindy," she said, "how'd you like to go to Oz?"

"You mean that fairyland where you disappeared to, Ms Mulroony?"

"That's the one."

"What's the story? You want me to transfer my act there completely—or just have a look-see?"

"Why, as to that, I'll leave the choice to you. If there is a choice. You see, you'll turn up in front of a young girl called Ozma: she's kind of a queen of the fairyland. According to how well you play your cards, why, I guess you could stay on there indefinitely. I'll let you in on a secret: I was *very* tempted to stay there myself the time I went. But I had to get back to you girls, of course. You decide. Naturally it'll be great to have you back if you want to come. Howsomever, I need to have somebody to try this thing out on. You see, I got this magic charm..."

Here the two women had a most fascinating quarter hour's confab. The upshot was that Cindy Lou touched the talisman and went to Oz. That is: she certainly disappeared from the hotel room without a trace and in an instant. Monique was satisfied as to the charm's efficacy. She tried to imagine the dark-skinned beauty in the presence of the little queen of Oz.

She didn't succeed. But when next day Cindy Lou hadn't returned Monique figured the dark girl *had* succeeded; that is, she had gone to Oz and she was staying there. The magic

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worked! Touch the talisman and go to Oz! That would be her slogan. At once she set about marketing the emerald box. She used the proceeds to make that corner in downtown Portland the trendiest place of business in town. The response to her full-page ads in *The Oregonian* and other papers couldn't have been more gratifying. She was in business.



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

“It wasn’t easy!” declared the crow as the taxis sped toward the airport. She was replying to a question by the interested woodmen as to what sort of journey she had had across Alaska and down the coast in the four days since the outbreak of hostilities at Little Diomedede. Then she gave a graphic description of the rain, hail storms, earthquakes, and dark of night that she and her faithful companion the Round Robin had had to face. But she had also to report the vast warm spring nor’ wester that had caught up the two adventurers and whooshed them the length of the British Columbia coast in a day.

Poor Dorothy Choggolak, in the car with the two birds and four of the woodmen, was feeling sadly out of it. She’d been feeling that way ever since the moment when K.K. and R.R. flapped into the room at the Mount Vernon West more alive than dead, and squatted exhausted on top of the T.V. set. With squawks and chirps the two birds had told the woodmen the main heads of their story; the capture of the crashed aeronauts, the birds’ decision to keep, albeit belatedly, the planned rendezvous in Seattle ... even their cleverness in escaping the notice of the night clerk while trying to find out downstairs at the check-in counter the number of the Ozites’ suite. “That was the hardest part of all,” related the robin, “and we might have failed

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here, right downstairs in the lobby, if we hadn't overheard the fellow gossiping on the phone in the inner office and bragging that President Koxden's daughter had been a resident in Suite A for a short time."

The woodmen were much diverted but not, alas, Princess Dorothy. As a non-Ozite she heard the cawing of the crow and the chirping of the robin as no more than that. But strangely too, whereas in Oz everybody could understand everybody, in Seattle Kaggi-Karr could not grasp what Dorothy said either. The robin had to interpret for her in bird language.

The other side of the coin was that Kaggi-Karr from Alternate Oz understood perfectly the speech of the Soviet captors of the refugees from the flight of the dragon. On that tiny detail hangs all the fabric of this tale. For in the harried moments during the rounding up of the shipwrecked Ozites K.K., trying to look as much as possible like a plain old Alaska crow and a natural part of the landscape, fluttered near enough to hear the soldiers, talking (whether Uzbeks, Mongols, or Muscovites) Russian and referring to where they intended taking the prisoners.

For Kaggi-Karr it was now of the greatest possible concern to organize a task force to follow her lead and go to the rescue! Let it be said in praise of those intrepid ten woodmen that they saw the handwriting on the wall and volunteered to play heroes before the crow had to ask them. They didn't know a thing about rescuing people from Soviet prison camps but they were willing to try. Secretly, to himself, perhaps more than one woodman said, 'Even if worst comes to worst we can't die in the attempt. Our magic will see to that.' So they put up their hands and stepped forward.

As soon as somebody translated for Dorothy, the spunky girl insisted on being one of the rescue party. The woodmen tried to stop her. She wouldn't hear of it. Then somebody interpreted for the crow what was going on and K.K. let out a mighty squawk. "No!" she stormed. "Now listen, men, time is of the essence. We don't want any nonsense here. Ms Dorothy is

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very brave and all that, and many's the time I've fetched her Other-Oz equivalents back to the Magic Land to save the bacon. But this time it's not make-believe. This is the real world! On commando-type mercy missions women are a pain in the neck (except one or two of us, of course). Instead of helping to rescue anybody they get stuck in a glitch that wouldn't have happened except for their frailty — or gorgeousness! — or both, and end up having to be rescued themselves, which always costs one or more of the real rescuers their necks. That's not going to happen this time. Tell the Princess she's wanted back in Oz! Make up some story. But lose her!"

That was a sad reversal of the traditional Volkovian situation. The woodmen were not very fond of breaking the news of the crow's decision to the Kansas heroine. Finally Albero B., who was generally considered to be the most sensitive and imaginative of the woodmen, essayed to say, "We think somebody ought to report back to Queen Ozma on what's happening and what's planned. Won't you do that, doctor? And it would be good to alert her to keep on keeping an eye on us in the Magic Picture. What we think we'll do is this..."

Thus, included after a fashion in the enterprize, Dorothy let herself be mollified into journeying back to Oz.

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Cindy Lou played it cool. She agreed with herself in Ms Mulroon's hotel room that whatever happened she wasn't going to panic. Monique had come back from *her* disappearing act with an emerald box. Cindy Lou intended to do no less. And she wasn't going to do it by breaking into hysterics when she found herself, *if* she found herself, in a wholly different setting far away.

She closed her eyes and began to plan a little speech, beginning "Dear miss princess—" Then when nothing seemed to be happening she opened them again.

Well, that was a blast! indeed. She was not any longer in the hotel room, but she wasn't in any green palace either! Fairy princesses were conspicuous by their absence. What she did see was the inside of a biggish (blue-violet!) room looking like an electrician's nightmare. Everywhere, on tables from walls and ceiling, hung wires, projected cranes and pulleys, or bubbled pots and "test tubes." At a far work bench a wizened-ish-looking man bent over beneath a bright shaded light looking at something through a jeweler's eye-piece,

Cindy remembered that she was going to play it cool. She gave a little pull to her girdle, fluffed the back of her platinum hair, and then strolled through the jungle of wires and pulleys

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to the table. "Hullo there," she whispered huskily, sounding a little like Mae West.

Even so the fellow jumped and dropped his ocular. "Goodness me. Where did you come from?"

Cindy continued to play it cool. She didn't say. Instead, she answered, "I was expecting to meet—er, Princess Ozma. Is she... around?"

"Ozma!? Here—in the outback? Why, no—"

"They said I'd—umm, find myself in front of—well, a fairy princess!... I don't understand..."

"I think I do." The Wizard Wam was a pretty bright button and he sized up in a moment, on the basis of these scanty clues, something of what must have happened. "Did you come here by the use of—well, magic?"

"Yes." A beautiful white grin split the American woman's rich-chocolate face. So Ms Mulroony's "charm" wasn't completely off the beam? "But I was supposed to show up near somebody called Princess Ozma."

"And instead you arrived in the presence of a little old magician named Wam." It was Wam's turn to smile. "Don't worry, my dear. Everything will be all right. Did you use a ring and a sort of a watch-fob?.. I thought so. You got hold of one of a batch I turned out several weeks ago. My grandson was to take them along on a flight to the—er, outer world. I've been wondering how he got on..."

"I don't know anything about that... sir," hesitated Cindy. "A friend of mine had the trick. She used it on me..."

"She'? Curiouser and curiouser." Wam looked puzzled and thoughtful, then, "But come! Let's go to the house. I'd like you to meet my wife - and we'll have a cup of tea. There's a lot of questions we'd probably both like to get answered."

Cindy Lou certainly didn't feel threatened by anything that had happened yet and she followed along willingly. As they stepped outside she looked up at the enormous and strangely balloony-shaped building they had just quitted. She thought it looked like a big soft airplane hangar, if one could imagine such

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a thing. "What a funny building," she said before she could stop herself.

"Oh, the barn?" said Wam. "I had a very large guest at one time. This was his quarters<sup>s</sup>. But it hasn't been used in about a century now - except for the workshop I installed there."

Cindy Lou was unprepared for the immediately next sensation. The sun! and the fresh air! The colors! It was years now since anyone in America had seen the sun otherwise than through a thick haze that ranged from dark ochre to grey-black in hue. Admittedly there was a thin haze in the air here too but nothing to be compared with the smog blackout in America. And then the smell; not of rotten eggs and rancid butter but of something... sweet! Hyacinths! It was also years since she'd smelled a hyacinth and Cindy wasn't even completely sure that was the name of what she thought she smelled now. She just knew she loved it. And the blue grass (Cindy was from Kentucky but she hadn't seen grass *this* blue there) and violet-blue-leaved trees and the blue (well, grey-blue) sky! It was like fairyland... It WAS fairyland.

Mrs Wam was all kindness and complacency. It came out in conversation that she had once been a Maid of Light and, in her yet ethereal blondness, dark Cindy Lou thought the lady still looked made of light. Mrs Wam served up a yummy cold collation, plus the promised warm beverage, with just a hint of—was it blueberry cordial?—in it. By the end of this session of tea and sympathy the American was pretty sure she didn't care about ever going back to whatever Portland, not to mention the streets of Philadelphia, had to offer.

Far was it from Wizard Wam to question the dispositions of his sovereign. If the arrangements of Princess Ozma had resulted in the arrival of this unusual-looking but quite pleasant-seeming woman in Oz he was not going to appear unwelcoming. "What do you think, my dear?" he said, turning to Lucinda, his wife. "The guest room—for a few days? And then we'll see. What would you like to do?" This to Cindy Lou. "How did you spend

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§ See *Uncle Henry & Aunt Em in Oz*. Ed's note.

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your time in America?"

The negress gulped. She should have been prepared for this question—but she wasn't. Finally she got out; "I was—er, a professional woman."

"Splendid," thought Wam and said so. "Which profession?"

"The oldest." The jest came out before Cindy knew what she was about.

Mrs Wam picked up the cue. "Oh, a housewife."

"Well, no, not exactly."

"Oh?" The two Ozites looked puzzled. But it was clear they were expecting an answer. Cindy Lou knew she was for it. Still she threshed about for a phrase that would soften the blow. "I was a lady of the evening."

"I'm sure you were a lady at all times, my dear," said Wamuppirovocuck benignly.

"I was—a call girl," muttered the guest.

"Oh, interesting," said Mrs Wam, delighted.

"Is that like a call-boy?" She sometimes glanced through the odd number of "Stage" or "Variety".

"Not exactly," confessed the American.

"You were an actress then?"

"Well-l, some people call us that. But I wasn't on the stage. I was on the streets."

"On the streets?" And the Wams, Mr and Mrs, looked at each other perplexed.

"I was a floozy!" blurted Cindy Lou.

That seemed to ring a bell. "I think I've heard of those, dear," Wam said to his wife sagely. "It's like a woozy, only American style."

"A woozy?" said the negress. Now it ,was her turn to be mystified.

"Well, no," retracted Wam. "You're really not at all like a woozy... A 'floozy', you say?"

"Yeah. Like a tart."

"Oh, yes!" said Mrs Wam enthusiastically. "I like a nice tart myself. Do you have a special recipe? People are kind enough to

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say my gooseberry ones are rather good." Then Cindy Lou had an inspiration. She'd once gone to Bermuda for a weekend and recalled that when she had to fill in a card at customs somebody had said "Write 'spinster' under 'Occupation'."

"I'm a spinster!" she announced in triumph.

"Ah," sighed host and hostess with satisfaction, "of course. 'When Adam delved and Eve span...' Of course it's the oldest profession! ...along with delving. How silly of us not to have remembered."

Mme Lucinda followed it up with; "There's an old spinning wheel in the parlor! You may use that whenever you like, Cindy Lou. I'll order in some wool this afternoon."

Cindy wondered in dismay how she was going to manage that caper. But that was a small hurdle compared to the one she'd just cleared.



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

The ten woodmen flew to Juneau. All civilian air traffic WITHIN Alaska was suspended for the duration of hostilities. Even surface travel was frowned upon. The authorities wanted rather to evacuate people *from* the state as long as it was going to be the front-line, but after all they

couldn't forbid people to go to their homes. The woodmen pretended their home was Nome.

Now, safely within the state though they were, how were they going to get across it? They hurried from the airport direct to the Log Cabin Visitor Center on Main Street, staring around them in awe at the mountains that rose up on every side. And wasn't that a 200-foot-high glacier face just up at the end of the street? No, they must be seeing things.

The young lady in the tourist bureau was most obliging. She had disappointments in store though for the intrepid woodmen. "The Marine Highway?" she repeated.

"Yes. People on the plane were talking about it. We understand that all travel around here is by sea, and since we've seen your mountains crowding right down to the water we believe it. So we'd like ten tickets on the Marine Highway—out to the west."

"I'm afraid you've had it," said the girl with a regretful laugh.

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"I mean, the Marine Highway's for getting TO Juneau—from all the other ports down the length of the Panhandle. There's the odd cargo boat that goes that way but there's no scheduled passenger service out along the open ocean—to Cordova and so on, if that's what you mean..?"

"Cordova? Maybe we'd better look at a map," suggested the woodmen's spokesman. They'd probably have been well advised to do that a good deal earlier on but when the Ozites got Kaggi-Karr's alarming report they had just stampeded to the airport and that was that. They knew from the crow's tale of her struggles to reach them that the state of Alaska was pretty big, but just HOW big they didn't grasp till the young lady spread out a comfortably large-scale map there on the counter in Juneau.

For one thing, Alaska was a fifth as big as the whole of the rest of the United States together. Bigger than Texas? Yes, and with California, Montana, and several other states piled on top. Superimposing the map of Alaska on that of the 'lower' U.S., the big state's southern island chain and coast, from Attu to Ketchikan, would stretch from the Pacific shore to the Atlantic.

"Phew!" said Forrest Sawyer. "We had no idea. Er—" (suddenly remembering that his home was Nome) "that is, about the rest of the state. Our home's in Nome—and we gotta get back there."

"Oh, dear," said the clerk and looked rather aghast. "That's going to be pretty impossible. The Russians have landed on your Seward peninsula. Haven't you heard? Nome is war headquarters. The only way to get in there is by military plane. I don't suppose you know anyone high up?"

As a matter of fact they knew the Commander-in-Chief, but it was a little late in the day to think of calling in the president for an assist. The first thing he would do would be to rule out any such hare-brained rescue plan as this of the woodmen's. The prospect did indeed look hopeless and the ten men were suitably depressed.

Then Sawyer raised his shoulders as if taking fresh courage. "We can but try," he said and looked to the others for their

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assent, which came unhesitatingly in the form of nods and "yeahs".

They continued to gaze at the map in wonderment. When you got right down to it, Alaska was geographically *very* strange. It seemed quite perverse that the southern "Panhandle" section should be considered one entity with the vast rest of the state at all. This was brought out when, failing a convenient sea route, Woody H. asked about going west by road.

"Oh, there's no road," assured the young woman confidently. "Getting out of Juneau by road is out of the question. Look."

Her finger pointed again. "You saw the mountains? Tunneling for a road could be done, I suppose, but see: there—and there; those are glaciers! coming right down to the open ocean. With the best will in the world there's no way you can build a highway across a glacier."

"How ever did the place get laid out so peculiarly?" wondered a woodman. "A territory where it's impossible to get from one part to another dry-shod."

"Blame that on the Russians too," laughed the girl. "In the early days it was agreed between the Russians and the British government that Russia would own all the coastline up to the crests of the nearby Coast Range. I guess they hadn't looked close to see there are places where the mountains amount to cliffs shooting straight up out of the water. Look!" she commanded again and showed a spot on the map where British Columbian sovereignty came right down to the headwaters of Glacier Bay. "That bit's quite unusual, you know; a place where two parts of a state, both of them on the mainland, cannot be reached, one from the other, without going out of the state or at least across water." Then the girl, who was clearly something of a geography buff, mentioned the two halves of Michigan, Lake of the Woods in Minnesota, and Virginia's Cape Charles.

"So what do we do?" pleaded the woodmen and threw themselves on her mercy.

"It's pesky," she admitted, "that they've stopped all civilian flying inside Alaska.

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I know it's to stop fatalities from cruising Russian planes but it's going to work terrible hardships on people who are dependent on the bush pilots—for everything. But there's nothing for it. You're going to have to go overland."

"I thought you said it's impossible!" blurted several voices at once.

"Oh, yes—keeping *inside* the state. But everybody crosses Canada without thinking twice. It's no trouble—" (But when four of the men remembered how they'd crashed in a swamp the last time they were in that part of the world, they didn't agree with her.) "Your passports are in order?"

Yes, when they first started shunting them around from pillar to post the American authorities had at any rate facilitated the woodmen's moves by issuing them all courtesy passports.

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"Not that they'll even ask to see them at the frontier," Went on the girl. "They usually don't—but this war situation may change things... Now you'll get a bit of a a ride, after all, on the Marine Highway," she went on consolingly. "That's the M.V. Fairweather that goes up the Lynn Canal to Haines. There you can get the bus, with connections right across the Yukon territory and as far as Fairbanks, well into the western interior—"

"That sounds all right," the woodmen said. They began to take a little heart.

"OR," went on the amiable clerk, "you might like to take the narrow-gauge railroad from Skagway to Whitehorse, and then the bus on from there."

"Gee, I don't know," hummed Forrest. "'Narrow gauge': wouldn't that be pretty slow?"

"Eight hours to Whitehorse," informed the girl. "With stops at every crossroad, depending I doubt if the bus would be any faster. Then when she mentioned that, in the interest of local color and atmosphere, two century-old railway coaches called "Lake Muncho" and "Lake Emerald" formed part of the train, the Woodmen plunked down their money for rail tickets without a further backward glance. A wave of nostalgia

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swept over them all.

The only slightly dissenting voice was that of Quadling nationalist and romantic Albero Boscaiolo. "You'd think there'd be one called 'Lake Quad' ! " he exclaimed. "It's a natural!"

But Forrest Sawyer, an old Muncho, soon talked him around.

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

Monique was doing a land-office business. When she continued to hear nothing from Cindy Lou she quickly shifted into high gear. From the brilliantly redecorated offices in Portland she sent two hundred people to Oz within a week. Still no squawks from the promised land. Emboldened, made even more brazen than she was by nature, Monique rushed Harriet and Janine off to open branch offices in Seattle and San Francisco. "Rent any old warehouse you can get cheap," she commanded. "It doesn't matter what it looks like. These suckers will shop anywhere and pay anything to get to Oz! What is it?!: the pollution? It *is* getting so you can't go out on the street without your gas-mask on. Or just the general debasing of the quality of life these days?" she posited, waxing philosophical. "Or maybe it's the war - and that can't last forever! We gotta strike while the iron is hot. I'll fly in at each of your places once a week to do the actual touch-and-going."

Once a week? But even with the feverish trade at Portland that still only filled up three days out of the seven. Monique grabbed salesgirls, practically off the streets, to man (sorry! to woman) offices in Los Angeles, San Diego, Las Vegas, and Salt Lake City, and rushed around with the women finding them premises and getting them installed. By the end of another week

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a thousand people had gone to Oz.

What was it like in that forest on the Munchkin-Gillikin border when these unlocked-for visitors began arriving?

Wammuppirovocuck took it in stride. There's no denying he did rather a double take the day he looked out the window and saw a crowd of people in shorts, Hawaiian shirts, and beach hats bearing down on his home with suitcases at the ready. He ran to the parlor and hollered in at Cindy Lou at the spinning wheel, where she was trying her best to look like an adept: "Some of your friends have arrived! Come and help me receive them." And as she joined him: "I'll admit I didn't expect so many or so soon."

Cindy didn't know of any friends who were expected at all but she was not in much doubt about what had happened. It was not without misgiving that she went outside.

A babble of voices reached their ears:

"I wanna see the manager!"

"When does the bus leave?"

"Is this included?"

"Where's the bathroom?"

"I want my money back!"

Wam tried ineffectually to soothe the discontented crowd. Mme Lucinda came out and sought, in her turn, to calm them with her charm. A couple of the couple's younger children appeared from the nursery and succeeded in diverting the attention of a few of the trippers.

"We'll get them into the barn," announced Wam. "I'll redesign it as a dormitory. With magic that won't take long. How many do you think there'll be, altogether?"

Cindy just stared. She hadn't a clue. "The Prince of Wates was pretty big by the end," said Wam cryptically. "I should think there'd be room for about eight hundred one-man cubicles. After that we'll have to see."

The fact that they shared given names (though in reverse order) was a great bond between Mme Lucinda and her first-arriving guest. The hostess at once dropped whatever she was

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doing and went to play co-tour guide with Cindy Lou.

"Where's the magic?! I wanna see the magic!" demanded a little round dark woman.

"I was told diamonds grow on trees here.

I want to load up," declared an eager gentleman and flourished an empty bushel-basket-size hamper.

"We were promised rides on a dragon," announced the mother of four. "I don't see any dragons."

"They're around back, in the garage, of course," fibbed Cindy Lou and began to lead the mob the twenty yards to the door of the big blue-violet barn.

Another large contingent arrived that evening. Fortunately the interior restructuring and decorating of the barn had already taken place and people could go right to their individual rooms.

All went merry as a marriage bell. Wam had magic to help. When one insistent group of Japanese with three cameras each demanded the "Two-Week Grand Tour" he scribbled a note and sent them by Hurry Cane to his old friend, the Countess of Gillequin in the north of the land of the Gillikins. She was requested to put them up for a night, then wish them on to King Randy in Regalia.

One party of do-it-yourself tourists with backpacks were sent off with self-refillable lunch pails into the Forest of Eternal Night. Wam thought that would keep them busy for at least a month.

Another large bunch had definite ideas about what they wanted to see. Doing a head count Wam found they would just about fill a bus, so he dispatched the group to Mrs Carmichael with the suggestion that if the old bus was still roadworthy that she had come to Oz in and her driver friend still in good form she might care to accompany the newcomers on a visit to Fuddlecumjig, Miss Cuttenclip's paper-doll town, and the valley of the (now civilized) Hammer Heads.

Then with a rubbing of hands he waited for the next wish-load to appear from the great world.

Wam made his big mistake when he wrote to the Consolidated Scalawagon Works in the industrial suburbs of the



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Emerald City. A number of forthright business types from Phoenix and L.A. had insisted on having their own automobiles. They were joined by some smash-'n-grab musicians who had found out by hearsay about the absence of heavy-rock music in the townships of Oz. With shouts of "It's undemocratic!" and "Open up for art!" they required to have transpo laid on for getting about on concert tours.

When the unusual order for 89 scalawagons to be delivered deep in the remote fastnesses of the Gillikin-Munchkin borderland came in, the plant manager sent it to Princess Ozma, as Honorary Chairwoman of the board of directors, for approval. She in turn sent for Zip P.O. Choggolak, as he now styled himself since being appointed Postmaster General of Oz.

Zip hadn't been doing anything in particular except just expediting letters all the while his wife and son had been gadding about in the great world. Frankly, he thought it was about time he was invited to get into the act. However, he was as mystified as the Girl Ruler when the latter said, "Dear me dear Zip, whatever can your father be up to? wanting eighty-nine scalawagons."

"It's a mystery to me, your grace. Do you think it'd be a good idea if I pop over there to have a look?"

"Maybe that would be best. Just a moment while I go get the Magic Belt. I'm not equipped, as you know, to just 'beam you in' on your dad... Oh, and be sure to bring my warmest personal greetings to both your parents."

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

The bus trip to Fairbanks proved rather wearisome. As a matter of principal Forrest S. urged all his companions to relax whenever they were confined for a time to one form or another of transportation on their quest. "We've done the best we can, trying to get the fastest possible onward connections. I know the days are running on but it can't do any good, chafing and worrying while we're on a boat or train or whatever; it won't make it go any faster. So relax. Look out the windows and enjoy the trip if you can."

That advice was okay while they sailed up Lynn Canal. The woodmen stayed on deck on the old Fairweather—for a while, that is, until the fall of soot drove them indoors again, to stare out from behind the extra-large picture windows. "Quite pretty round here," said someone, recalling their old refrain from on the road in New Zealand. The usual rejoinder followed: "That is, if you could see it."

"Oh, I don't know. A black glacier's quite fun. I got a glimpse of one just now when I was out. Look: it says here in the guide book you can see snowy mountains, steep timbered slopes, and a wealth of sea and bird life—"

"Lemme see that," snapped Arbol and grabbed the book. "No wonder: 'copyright 1983'. Even then it doesn't say what

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color the snow was. As we keep reminding ourselves, there's twice as many people now as there were in the world then—and three times as much industry."

"Never mind. We can listen to the narrator telling us what's out there even if we can't see it. And yum: I'm going to have another cocktail." The hostesses were attentive and if there was no feast for eyes outside there was a feast for palates within.

Sitting in the Lake Emerald car later, they tried to catch sight of the advertised waterfalls, gorge, lakes, glimmering meadows, and fields of wildflowers but, alas, it was not only the meadows that had gone glimmering.

The train serpented up and down and around mountains. Luckily none of the woodmen were photography buffs. Thus, they felt no frustration at not being able to get a photograph of the train maneuvering hairpin curves as its engine disappeared into tunnels in rocky mountainsides; there was too much smoke in the air. However, after Fraser at the summit of the pass it seemed as if the atmosphere cleared marginally. Now they could see almost as far as they could in New Zealand.

That was the fun part, such as it was. The bus trip from Whitehorse was just enervating. It was dreary treeless tundra most of the way but the real annoyance was the road itself. Where Alaska highways (they were to learn) were virtually all paved, even over the permafrost, the roads of the Canadian Yukon retained their antediluvian gravel nature. When you looked out the dust-matted windows all you could really see, as being near enough, was the flying gravel as it kept up a tattoo on the panes like the clack of glass popcorn. The woodmen were both physically and morally low as they hove into Fairbanks on the evening of the third day.

Here their number came into useful play. The ten fanned out, each one separately, to make what onward travel connections they could. When they met in their motel rooms later Tajar Madera could report that it was possible to carry on with bus travel as far as Kantishna on the slopes of the Alaska Range in one direction or as Ruby, down the Yukon River, in another.

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"They're pushing the road on to the confluence with the Koyukuk," Tajar announced; "that is, they were - till this war situation came along."

"Never mind that," quashed Bucheron A. "I ran into a bush pilot who's willing to smuggle us on to Ruby by plane in a fraction of the time. Shall we take it? The only thing is: he'll only do it for cash. It'll use up every cent we've got left. With a black market operation like this credit cards are no use."

Yes! they'd take it. Still, in the hired cars to the flying field under cover of darkness, Waldo Baumschneider relayed what he'd found out. "I asked about river travel. There's a sidewheeler steamer goes down the Chena once a week. It left yesterday." Everybody groaned. "But I also found out about smaller boats. I learned we could rent a little outboard yacht with all necessary gear for a thousand dollars. Still, of course, the plane is quicker."

Forrest Sawyer was quick to pick up on that. "What about the same deal from Ruby on?! That could come in handy."

"Gee, I don't know, boss. But wait! the guy did say we could turn in the rig at other spots where they've got agencies. I know he mentioned Tanana and Fort Yukon..."

"Okay. We can always hope. Meanwhile we're in for this Wright brothers flight... Ruby..." Forrest mused on. "And we've had 'Emerald'. By the way, I've been studying that map. There's a 'Polychrome Pass' in Mount McKinley Park! And a village called Eureka. Not to mention the Baum spelling of 'Nome'."

"Yeah, I thought of that," chimed in Coupeur du Bois. "And did you know the nowhere spot where the Russians have landed on the mainland is called 'Tin City'?!"

The woodmen were off again on their favorite pastime of Oz nostalgia.

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

Actually the Russians were very polite to their captives. Naturally they were vexed that the aeronauts, whom they assumed to be Americans, had dared to show enough spunk to resist being herded sheep-like to a landing area in Siberia. When the strange dirigible crashed on American soil the convoy pilots panicked. They radioed the army outpost on Greater Diomedea that orders were to capture the aircraft at all costs, though in fact they had only been commanded to take it by *air*. When the commando unit panicked in turn and failed to contact supreme headquarters before launching a little amphibious operation, the war was on. Still, that didn't mean they were going to profit by roughing up the downed air travelers.

Those were fraught moments when the command car, followed more slowly by a small amphibious tank, caught up with the fleeing Ozites. Lestar, always intelligently alert, had taken note of the departure of Kaggi-Karr and her companion. There was just a chance rescue might follow as a result. Better not panic just yet! When he got a chance he passed the word to his companions.

Nobody was in tears. Ex-General Jinjur was as plucky as any of the men. Still, there's no denying there were more white faces than pink ones among the Ozites when the confrontation took

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place. Four heavy men in thick cloth coats, with insignia on their 194/ fur-fronted hats, stalked towards them with pistols significantly not pointed.

One stepped forward with what passes in Russia for a smile and offered cigarettes. Silently the captives declined. Who was going to be the first to speak? All parties concerned were aware of the futility of rattling off anything in their native language. If there is one thing rarer than Russians who know English, it's Americans who know Russian. In the present case, however, it was not, as the captors supposed, Americans who were involved but Ozites and among their number was one who had a professional smattering of languages. Dr.Em. H.M. Wogglebug was fluent in Italian and Swahili and had also had occasion to dabble slightly in Russian. He could rattle off phrases like "Volshebnik Izumrodnovo Goroda" and "sem podzernich korolya" with perfect ease. Such only might seem a bit frivolous in the present circumstances. The professor always memorized a favorite droll sentence in each language he sampled (just to startle people with at cocktail parties, when this or that language was mentioned). Thus he could say 'En af vores missekatte er død' or 'J'aime les bananes parce-qu'ils n'ont pas d'os.' But he stopped short now of saying 'On navodyit na menya stroshnuyu tosku' as being even more unpolitic than those book titles.

He needn't have worried. Little Lestar stepped forward and with grave but perfect accent said, "Zdrastvuiye! Ya nazivayoos Lestar—" and he proceeded to introduce his companions.

Russians *can* smile. At least, they can grin. Huge ones split the faces of the four Soviet militaries and after that it was almost old-home week, so much cordiality was displayed. Before half an hour had passed one of the officers had actually apologized to Lestar for shooting them down (so to speak), though he immediately afterwards looked stern and said something harsh to make up.

The glum captives were briefly searched and the absence of weapons on them noted. Then they were conducted to the tank, which had gradually caught up with the command car. "For

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your own safety," said (in Russian) the senior of the officers and indicated that the ten Ozites should climb up the cleats along the rear of the tank. Surprisingly there was adequate room for all, plus the tank crew, down inside. The officers did not follow. Their duty was to investigate the collapsed and sprawling 'dragon'.

To the tune of muffled booms in the distance and the occasional swift tattoo of machine-gun fire the tank moved off. The Ozites crouched on camp stools in the confined interior. Henk couldn't forget that the last thing he'd seen before descending inside was one of the white buildings in the east exploding into a shower of kindling. He guessed it was war after all.

The tank presently proved its amphibiosity. The captives could tell by the lurching sick-making motions of the vehicle that it was riding the waves. The geography of the region was unknown to any of the Oz people save Koboble the navigator and Henkomankatogale and to them only very sketchily. They weren't to realize that American Diomedea was only three miles distant from Russian. Nevertheless they had cause to be glad of the circumstance. The weakest-stomached of the lot (Professor Wogglebug—but then he'd had so little practice in the management of a human anatomy) was just on the brink of a small tragedy when the tank treads gripped pebbles and ground ashore on the farthest-east outlier of Siberia.

Lestar and his alternate-Oz compatriots kept their ears cocked and by the time the group had climbed out of the amphibian onto a mat of blackish-green tundra such as they had just left on the other island, we was able to whisper the word along to the rest that apparently they were to be flown to Moscow that night.

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

Mrs Choggolak was obviously not going to be left out of any plans her husband had for important undertakings out and about in Oz. She'd been feeling frightfully at loose ends since her unsatisfactory and almost impromptu return from America.

She and her chums talked for days about her memories of a half year or more in the outer world but it gnawed at Dorothy seriously that she had not been able to return covered with glory. Her only consolation was that in every situation she had surely done the best she could. The situations had merely been unlucky ones.

On her appearance in the Palace of Magic her first dash had been into the arms of her husband Zip. She had to bring him word of the awful fate of their child: forced down on a bleak shelf of rock in the Bering Sea. Still, she had Kaggi-Karr's word for it that Henk and all his companions had emerged unscathed from the crash. Nothing *too* terrible was going to happen to them now. After all a rescue party was even now on its way to them. Dorothy laughed ruefully, recalling the gormless woodmen.

"You don't think I should invoke special magic and whisk them all; aeronauts, woodmen, and everybody, back here?" asked Fairy Ozma who was standing by.

"Oh, no, that would be such a flat ending!" exclaimed



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Dorothy, who was herself at that moment suffering from abortia enterpritis. "Let the woodmen - and, yes, the others too—have their adventure out. Who knows? they might even succeed in the end in accomplishing some of what we all set out to do."

They left it at that then. Ozma did, however, leave the Magic Picture turned on round the clock so they had the aeronauts or the woodmen constantly in focus and if they found them in a crisis they could do something.

Zip and Dorothy got Ozma to transport them in a twinkling to the house in Legerdemain Lane. What was their astonishment to find the grounds crawling with people (who didn't look the least bit Ozian) and most of the windows in the huge blue barn displaying more of the same. Gone was the bucolic charm of the remote deep-country setting. The blare of smash music was deafening. (The difference between smash and its predecessor rock was that the new sound no longer made any pretense to tune and the singing was just screaming with no attempt at articulated words.)

Dorothy demanded an explanation. "Oh, hi, daughter-in-law," said the Wizard Wam. "And Zip! You here too? Splendid! What's the story?... Oh, yes, the music; it is pretty frightful, isn't it?" he said, noticing the couple's hands clapped to their ears. "But that lot'll be gone, soon as we can get in a shipment of scalawagons. Actually, I'd been planning to write the Queen and find out what her further plans were for the new colonists."

"The Queen'? Do you mean Ozma?" said Dorothy when she had lowered her hands and Wam's remark been repeated. "Plans for colonists'. Whatever do you mean?"

Wam in turn looked surprised. "Why, these folks have all made use of some return-to-Oz homing devices I supplied to Ozma and Glinda weeks ago. It must have been at the Princess' invitation...?"

Thus belatedly did the whole fearful situation become revealed to those who were going to have to deal with it. Dorothy just hurriedly conveyed Ozma's greetings to Mme Lucinda as she was directed to the second floor of the barn (now

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called the 'Hostel'). There she was to seek a "Miss Cindy Lou" who, it appeared, had taken over the whole of that floor for a cottage industry.

Not only spinning but weaving and dressmaking were going on at full tilt, carried out by the more earnest and industrious of the new "colonists". Cindy had exchanged her form-fitting sequined dress for a sensible overall and her lacquered locks were confined by a snug-tied head scarf.

"Good heavens!" cried Dr Choggolak. "I remember you! You were one of the ten woodmen's—er, women friends."

"That's right," admitted the negress quite readily. "And you were the lahdidah—oh, sorry—ladylike 'princess' in the hotel room in Seattle."

But nobody shook hands.

It was Dorothy's sorry duty - taken up with a good deal of verve - to get to the bottom of the sordid tale of theft and deceit that had resulted in this unlooked-for influx of new residents to Oz. "Ozma will be furious," she cried, although in fact it was Dorothy herself who was more given—at *widely* separated intervals—to spells of furiosity than the equable-natured little fairy ruler herself.

Zip elected (and was glad of the excuse) to stay on for a visit and good old gossip-fest with his dad and mother rather than return with the agitated Dorothy to the Emerald City. There the scene was no more delightful than he might have anticipated. Dorothy succeeded in infecting her friend Ozma with her own alarm at the future of Oz if mass migrations to the fairyland were going to be allowed to go on at the present rate.

Ozma panicked mildly. She called Sorceress Glinda on her two-way wrist radio. "Oh, Glinda darling, do get up here quick! Something too awful has happened..." She gave the barest details and rang off, then ran to the tower apartment of the Wizard of Oz, with Dorothy sprinting behind her. From Diggs' laboratory phone they called the Royal Historian and the genial author was soon jogging to the palace from the Wimugiqua Hotel.

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They discussed aspects of the situation while waiting for Glinda to show up. Ozma wrung her hands. Even Princess Dorothy, though gratified to be the bearer of important (even if bad) news, was upset to see how the little queen, for almost the first time anyone could remember, had lost her cool. Not since her misadventures with Atmos the air-man<sup>s</sup> had anyone seen the Princess Regnant of Oz in floods of tears. Even the supposed death of everyone's friend Button Bright<sup>ss</sup>, had only made her very sad, not actually breaking down.

"Oh," she moaned. "Isn't it dreadful? Rock musicians in Oz! And businessmen! It was bad enough with floozies, but now this—"

"There's only one floozy, dear," Dorothy tried to comfort her friend. "And actually she seems to be pulling her weight quite praiseworthy." Dorothy was at all times fair.

"But Ms Mulroony's also been, and with the ring-and-key she may well be back. But it's not that, nor anything else that's *already* happened, that bothers me so much. It's what's going to happen—what *has* to happen."

"Dear us," said the others, puzzled. "What's that?"

"Why, don't you see?!" Ozma stopped her tears and stared wide-eyed. She couldn't believe that her friends, none of whom was dopey, had not seen as far and as fast as herself. "We must close Oz! There's no telling how many thousands that woman will send here! It's bad enough with all the refugees camped around the outer periphery; the ones that came here over-land. That situation we can control. But Ms Mulroony's operation sends people right inside Oz! and there's no way to stop her... except one. We're going to have to seal off the country hermetically. No one, even with the strongest magic, is ever to be able to come here again. And that's what breaks my heart!"

Then she dissolved in tears again.

It was now the others' turn to stare wildly. Seal off Oz?! But what about the dragon voyagers?! and Dorothy's own son? And

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§ See *The Hungry Tiger of Oz*.

§§ See *The Magic Mirror of Oz*. Editor's notes.

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the poor old woodmen! What about them?

When Glinda arrived that was the first item on the agenda and they went into deep conference. "We must fetch them all back - willy nilly," declared the sorceress, and groaned inwardly. The thing could be done, but was immensely difficult. Indeed, as she racked her memory, the good witch could think of no occasion throughout Oz history when the procedure had been tried; to fetch away to the fairyland an individual from the outer world who was neither expecting nor desiring it.

A journey to Oz for someone actively willing it and at the same time in possession of the requisite magic implement(s), be it wishing ring or magic umbrella or silver shoes, was simpler than the simplest. Only slightly more complicated was it to bring to the magic land a person wanting it who, however, had no tools of sorcery to assist in the transportation. But to snatch away a person in the outer world who had not been informed and was not expecting it; that was hard. Glinda quailed at the thought of the sheer spiritual and technical sweat involved.

Thus it was she who proposed a motion to wait a few more days before plunking down permoseal all around Oz. "Their missions are hopeless," she said. "They must see that. Surely before long they'll come home by themselves... Besides, without Henkomankatogale here to read his plans for me, I don't even know if I *can* build this dome over Oz..!"

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## C H A P T E R   F O R T Y - T H R E E

In fact, the departure for Moscow was held up a few days. The party investigating the crashed airship were very much puzzled by what they found. Where they had expected the very latest in Western perfection of offensive weapons and surveillance instruments they found objects whose utility they did not at all understand. They decided there had better be some arm-twisting on the spot and a detailed explanation required of those most likely to know the significance of the equipment.

Naturally the Ozites were cheered when they heard they were not immediately to be transported into the heart of the Kremlin, whence they could never be rescued. Just a very few days and surely Kaggi-Karr would have fetched the finest in Israeli commando teams, hired by the great and good friend of Israel, Pres. Koxden, whom the Ozites also knew to be a warm supporter of Oz and champion of Princess Dorothy, whom Kaggi-Karr would be meeting in Seattle. Just spin out the time, that was all.

“What day is this? Thursday?” said Jinjur when the group were allowed a half hour to confer among themselves before having their arms twisted again or possibly finger nails removed. “We’ll say those are highly specialized implements keyed to a master switch in our home country and that the switch is only

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thrown on Wednesdays.”

The proposal was hare-brained but they were grasping at straws, so they bought it. Unfortunately it backfired. There was a heavy exchange of telephone and radio messages with Moscow that only occupied two days. Then word was brought to the anxious captives; “The entire contents of the downed aircraft and the foreign personnel could conveniently be transferred to Supreme Headquarters within the interval stated.” Consequently they would lift off that night, Saturday.

There went the dream of rescue. Now all the prisoners had to hope for was that the cargo jet they were to do the Asian journey in would be shot down at take-off, whereupon they would try to arrange surviving a second air crash.

Alas, the sights and sounds they had been witnesses to on Little Diomedé had been misleading. Just as World War I had made the world safe for democracy, World War II had made the world safe for war. For more than half a century now no war-making power had dreamed of using nuclear bombs to bring about a drastic and effective stop to any hostilities. You could start a war nowadays in perfect confidence that it could go on indefinitely with the use of only comfortable safe old conventional weapons. The present conflict was no exception. American and Soviet troops in Alaska kept up a little target practice when they saw anyone moving on the opposing side, as they settled in snugly, armed with rifles and machine guns and with anti-aircraft artillery that would do to bring down any mere strafing fighter planes that came too close. However, there was nothing capable of downing a transport plane taking off eighty miles behind the lines. Those lines, by the way, now stretched across the nose of the Seward Peninsula.

The flight to the Russian capital was uneventful. The prisoners were treated well. They even had the opportunity to become enthusiastic about a Russian dish called pirozhki, a delightfully chewy pastry shell filled with indefinable but most savory mixed bits. Lestar said they were as good as you could get in his own native version of Oz, even if they had merely been microwaved

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high above the Gobi Desert and the original cook's identity was all unknown.

Of course there were delays in Moscow. Their captors announced, all thought of the original Wednesday deadline forgotten, that some weeks would have to elapse before protocol could be attended to and all things put in readiness. The Chairman of the Party had been briefed. His curiosity was aroused and he himself was going to be present! at the solemn gathering when the "visitors" (as they now in a regular fest of fellowship were being called) would, with naturally the greatest good will, demonstrate the exact working of their secret weapons (which they were of course still assumed to be).

Ojo for one said he'd sooner die (if such a thing should have been possible) than to reveal to a lot of Russians the workings of Oz magic. But then Prof. Wogglebug took him to task. "My dear young fellow!" he exclaimed. "Have you forgotten that for that purpose only our voyage has been made?: to show to the world, to PROVE to the world, that Oz magic works. Princess Ozma and the Wizard and company did not instruct us; 'Convince the Americans (for example) of the efficacy of magic.' No! Everybody, the whole world, is, insofar as possible, to be brought to see the light. I personally think it's great good fortune we've been given this opportunity. And the contrast! Princess Dorothy could not get anyone in America to stand still a moment while she tried to sell magic. Now here are the Russians begging us to show them!"

After that speech everyone felt wonderfully cheered. Commander Henk even went so far as to summon their jailers and ask to have the finds from the crashed dragon brought to them in their cells so that they might practice with the devices and be able to put on a really proficient show when the appropriate Wednesday rolled around. Of course the guards saw through that ploy and sternly denied them any such access. They knew what the "visitors" would do the minute they had such weapons in their hands. Wouldn't they themselves, the guards, do the like?

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So the prisoners kicked their heels and waited. Then, one Wednesday, just after lunch, they were conducted through miles of passageways to a big white padded-walled room. Spectator desks behind transparent bullet-proof screens were ranged around three walls. Laid out on long tables in the center of the room was all the sadly jumbled but fairly whole-looking magic equipment from Oyhho II.

Henkomankatogale had to smile as he surveyed the scene. Those protective screens! How little the naive Russians suspected of what was coming. What use was a two-and-a-half-inch thick plate of indestructible plastic when you aimed a magic wand at what was behind it?

No seats were provided for the Ozites. They were expected to be on their toes and performing. They were routinely searched as they entered. Curiously, no move had ever been made to remove from them the rings and neck pendants they all wore. From the (auspicious) start the Soviets had not been out to be mean to them, just render them harmless, and what harm could a bit of jewellery do?

Now a uniformed guard silently opened a door in the back of the hall and a line of commissars filed in. Last of all came one wearing a genial smirk known to a generation of T.V. viewers throughout the world. He took his place behind the center screen, nodded, and the show could begin.

Jinjur, tacitly appointed mistress of ceremonies, had little artistry in her makeup. She just stumped military-fashion to the table, picked up what looked like a water pistol with a very blunt snout, aimed it in the air, and fired. As long as she held the trigger a tube of solid-looking vermilion coloring flowed out, and hung in the air. She released, then pressed again, and now a similar length of chrome yellow, like painter's pigment, was ejected; it just stayed in the air and very gradually and slowly began to sink. It could not be said to "float" — it looked too solid for that. It simply *was* there, suspended in the air. Next the young woman shot a streamer of ultramarine. Then came a pea-green one, another of burnt ochre, a silver one a chocolate-brown one,



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and one of off-lack. Then a little tiny bolt of battleship grey, just to end off with.

Next Jinjur, with none of the airs and races of a mannequin, walked out into the 'field' of air-borne color bands and moved about freely among them. They didn't budge, other than their slow drift groundwards, but when the lengths of color and Jinjur's body tried to occupy the same physical space the color bands disappeared while the corresponding area of the woman's form appeared solidly dyed in the respective color. Thus from moment to moment she displayed a red head, a black back, a blue shoe.

She kept that up until, after about six minutes, the long 'sausages' of color came to rest on the floor, at which each in turn abruptly disappeared. Then Jinjur went back and rejoined her comrades.

Now ex-navigator Koboble stepped out. He could see the Russian spectators leaning forward, utterly perplexed at what they had just witnessed but with faces showing neither delight nor disgust, just stony attention. Koboble rummaged on one of the tables and took up a little black stick (a contribution of Oz Diggs, wizard). He twirled it in the air in a complicated, apparently pre-ordained series of passes, then tapped it three times on the table edge. One after another nine tiny piglets appeared on the table top. Rearing on their hind legs, they joined fore-trotters and danced a dainty minuet, treading carefully among the scattered items of magic junk. They took only one bow, then vanished.

But that was too much for Soviet gravity. The commissars broke into spontaneous applause. The Secretary of the Communist Party was seen to smile.

Now Jinjur led forward Professor Woglebug who demonstrated a version of the pocket orchestra. He hummed, with a hint of entomic buzzing, "Ochi Chornya", "The Volga Boatmen", and not quite authentically, "Lara's Theme", then waited a moment until a fully orchestrated medley of the tunes burst deafeningly from every corner of the hall. The Russians put their

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hands to their ears but grinned recognitorily.

Lestar was next. He stepped forward and illustrated efficiently the use of the augury auger and the clever cleaver and the see saw. The latter seemed particularly to engage the imaginations of the Alter-Ozite's audience. As the little artisan sawed away at a corner of his table (which fortunately was of stainless steel and took no damage) and the flexible saw emitted a musical whining sound, Lestar 'orchestra-led' with his other arm, pointing first at his fellow travelers ranged behind the tables, then tapping his brow with a finger, and finishing off with a sweeping gesture directed at the esteemed onlookers.

Over a space of several seconds images of Princess Ozma, Sorceress Glinda, the Patchwork Girl, Oorfene Deuce, a hulking wooden soldier, and the Shaggy Man appeared in the room and moved about graciously, making bows in front of the protective plastic screens. The spectators seemed to grasp what was going on. After all these men had grown up on *Volshebnik Izumrudnogo Goroda* and *Urfin Dzuhs i yego Dyerevyannie Soldati* and they recognized the latter when they saw them. The saw went on squeaking away and suddenly an apparition was seen of a little overstuffed figure in a pointed hat decorated with emeralds. Next moment everyone was startled when Josef Stalin appeared, and then in quick succession Lenin, Kalinin, Molotov, Trotsky (very quickly suppressed), and a whole pantheon of Communist heroes. Now everyone got into the act and in a minute Princess Dorothy Choggolak, the Frogmen of Oz, and fairies Bastinda, Stella, and Gingemma were seen socializing with certain chesty dowdily dressed middle-aged women, presumably wives of the commissars. The Scarecrow of Oz shook hands with Strasheela. Then suddenly everyone was shocked by the arrival of a bevy of naked women who attempted to climb over the protective screens and approach the dignitaries.

Abruptly Lestar stopped sawing and all the figments vanished. The presenters breathed a sigh of relief.

Now Docent Henkomankatogale came forward, carrying a silver wand lightly in his right hand. He touched its tip to his

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left forefinger tip and glanced about speculatively. His eye fell on young Ojo the Lucky and he made a come-hither gesture of the head. The youth stepped toward his leader with alacrity. Gone were his reservations about displaying the working of the magic.

Henk lifted the wand, uttered an incantation, touched Ojo with the staff, and in a twinkling the Oz boy had disappeared and in his place stood a little craggy-looking fellow with a long beard, clutching to his breast an earthenware pot full of something shining yellow. A leprechaun!

“Hey, presto!” cried Henk—and there was Ojo again. The leprechaun was gone, taking his pot of gold with him.

Next the docent changed his fiancée into a gazelle. He liked to think of her that way. To prove that he himself was just one of the boys Henk handed the wand to Ojo and whispered a word. The other Ozite spoke the spell and where Henk had stood was the spokesboy of the Lollipop Gym with his customary bouquet of paper flowers. As the midget, Henk walked forward to the Chairman’s shielded seat and strained upward to drop the bouquet over the top of the screen into his lap. The Chairman looked no end pleased. Having resumed his true shape and with Lestar as interpreter, the young engineer now enquired if any of the Commissars would care to try getting out of himself, being somebody else for awhile. This brought guffaws from all the Soviet officials and to a man they pointed at one burly dark-scowling individual who appeared to be utterly humorless. He was obviously the butt of the presidium.

Henk looked back to the Chairman, who nodded. Surprisingly, he was still clutching the Lollipop gymman’s bouquet.

Henkomankatogale beckoned to his interpreter Lestar and the two moved close to the chairman’s screen and spoke around it. Later Lestar remained on in intermittent chat with the august one. Meanwhile Henk stepped to the little gate door in the bank of spectators’ desk seats and signalled to the scowling bear, who grudgingly made his way over to where the Ozite could touch him with the wand.

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It was done. And there indeed stood a great shaggy seven-foot brown-black Russian bear, decked out in the uniform of a Commissar. A great gust of laughter, wonderment, and awe went up from his colleagues.

Nor did the babble die down afterward when, quickly, Henk undid the enchantment and the official lumbered back to his place. His closest-to associates leaned near to speak to him but he only grunted in reply.

Emboldened by that success and encouraged by the Soviets' obvious consensus, at least for a brief while, that magic was more fun than Communism, Henkomankatogale now did something daring, indeed a bit too daring. One wonders what went on in the mind of the usually so urbane and unflappable docent. Was it after all a spark of resentment that his expedition, with himself in charge, had come to so ignominious an end? That he had been able to do no more for his companions than let them be delivered into the power of a nation whose representatives, however affable-acting, had behaved toward them as aggressors without cause? That they were now constrained to perform before their captors like trained seals, without even a chair to sit down on, as if they were scarcely even 'people'?

However it may be, Henkomankatogale signed to little Lestar to come near him again. Through him he put the question to the Supreme Soviet of them all whether he himself would like to essay a transformation. To Henk's after all considerable surprise the Chairman in his usual 'affable' manner indicated assent. Perhaps something had been lost in translation. Perhaps he thought he was being invited himself to *perform* a transformation. However it may be, he did certainly rise from his place, make his way the couple of paces to the door-gate, and walk out onto the 'stage' beside the wand-wielding Ozite.

Henk hesitated only a second, then moved the wand through a swift pass, spoke speedily the magic words, reached across and tapped the chairman's shoulder before he knew where he was, and turned him into a monkey's uncle.

A gasp of horror arose from the spectators, Russians and

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Ozites alike. A roar of rage was heard from the Soviet side—but also some titters. But not from the Chairape himself, who chattered benignly, scratched himself under his arms, and took a few tentative steps in his ballet skirt!

Aghast at what he had done Docent Henk lost no time in reversing the enchantment, tossed aside the wand, and hurried forward to utter, via his interpreter, various apologies and solicitous enquiries. He hoped most earnestly, he said, that the Honorable Chairman had suffered no discomfort during his forty-five seconds as—another.

“Why, no,” replied the great one. “I felt quite myself.”

Not a soul dared laugh.

Maybe the incident could have been passed off harmlessly but Henk was taking no chances. He turned abruptly, stepped to his Oz compatriots, and made a pre-arranged signal. As had been agreed days before, the Ozites twisted their rings, gripped their neck talismans, and mumbled “Pryzxql”. Instantly they vanished.

But, even more startlingly, Artisan Lestar—and one other—stayed behind.

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

Ruby was not exactly the Ruby City of Oz. The first sight of the sub-Arctic community was somewhat grim. The tiny weathered buildings appeared almost lost in the expanse of dark tundra. As they surveyed it in the dawn's early light (while their pilot walked along thumb-counting his pack of greenbacks), the ten woodmen felt like they'd come to the end of the world. Only, alas, they hadn't. If it had been the end of the world (for surely one such end is the tip of the Seward peninsula) they might have looked across the restless Bering Strait to their hoped-for destination. But that was still four hundred miles away. They all felt a sudden strong impulse to call after the pilot and beg him to come back. They mastered the impulse. He had been a case-hardened, grim-visaged loner in a battered leather jacket and needing a shave. There had been no small talk during the two-hour flight that put them down outside Ruby at three o'clock in the morning. The pilot hadn't even mentioned where the all-night café was.

Near the Arctic Circle in early June three A.M. is not dark but it's still early. What to do until places opened? if there *was* any place to open and if it ever did. The weathered shacks of what looked like an Indian trading post were very much shut up. Nothing stirred; just the mosquitoes. They stirred enough

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to make up for whatever motion might otherwise be lacking. They made the woodmen move too: anywhere to get away from them. But where? The road from the landing strip stretched wide between off-lying sod-roofed shanties but it seemed to lead nowhere. They knew though that it must. This was the raw new road that dead-ended seventy miles farther on at Koyukuk. In a fairer world of the future it was the intention that you should be able to ride this road in comfort to Nome, but that time was yet far off.

Around a bend past a low earth bank things brightened up. A gas station! and lit, to boot. Well, it stood to reason. The construction crews hadn't dropped dead because war had come. Quite the contrary. Work on the road project was being rushed forward and here were the visible signs of it. A dozen dump trucks, earthmovers, and long-haul flatbeds revved their motors in the early dawn and cab radios made the half-light hideous, and cheerful, with their screech. The woodmen hurried forward.

The interior of the service-station-cum-cafeteria-and-general-store was garish with unshaded fluorescent light. The blare of the truck radios was, however, a little muted here. The woodmen turned out their pockets and produced enough small change to embolden them to approach the counter. A squat broad-faced Indian woman beamed at them, displaying gold teeth. She said, "What'll it be, boys?"

"Oh—er, coffee," said spokesman Sawyer.

When that had been amiably provided the spokesman leaned forward on one elbow and asked confidentially: "Any chance of a lift on west from here? I mean, these truckers: think any of them might have room in back?" His heart both fluttered and sank.

"Ask 'em," urged the woman as good-naturedly as ever.

That was it. That was what Forrest had been faintly dreading since they'd spotted the trucks. Hitch-hiking was okay; in fact, nothing better. Nor, once you had a lift, was there any end to the cordiality and helpfulness you as hitch-hiker were

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willing to show. Even standing by the road and throwing up your thumb, hundreds of times in vain, was all right. That was impersonal as it were, anonymous. A refusal there didn't count. But to go up to somebody and *ask* for a ride, and get turned down; that was hateful. Forrest Sawyer couldn't stand rejections. Never had been able. A rejection like that you could remember for years. Silly.

Skog Vedhuggar and Woody Hackett weren't so thin-skinned. They harkened to their chief's nudge and went and propositioned all the drivers slumped over café tables, drifting among the canned goods, or jiggling by the juke-box. Then they went outside and asked all the men who were at their machines.

The answer was unanimous; "No room." That is; several of the truckers good-naturedly allowed as how they could squeeze in one or two. But ten?! No dice.

Even the "one-or-twos" were considered by the luckless woodmen. But it had been confirmed at the other end of the Pacific that splitting up was fatal. All-decisive was the consideration; what if six or eight got on, by "one or two", to the Koyukuk, but not the rest? No, they'd stay together or bust.

They looked to see if there was anything left after the payment for coffee. When they showed a credit card the woman just grinned. No, it was hours yet before they could buy anything with a credit card in benighted Ruby — if they ever could at all. With the final coins they bought a sack of lithe red last year's apples (eighteen of them) the cheapest edible thing in the store. Then they shouldered their packs and went back out on the tundra.

It was broad daylight now though four o'clock in the morning. Some people think mosquitoes are a dark-hours phenomenon. Arctic mosquitoes never heard of that. The race are perhaps more fiendishly industrious by day even than by dark. Outside the flapping swing door of the gas station emporium they descended in their millions.

Some of the men even uttered little squawks of distress. Though it was by no means cold during the light June nights in



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central Alaska, the woodmen were bundled up in caps, scarves, and gloves dictated by the knowledgeable outfitter in Juneau. But faces remained undeniably bare and onto each settled a body-to-body mask of the whining stinging insects. It was fierce.

The men stumbled to the road edge and dropped their packs to scuffle inside. They couldn't just remember who had the two or three "mosquito pipes" they'd been cautioned to buy in Juneau. Earlier they hadn't so much appreciated their use but now it was as if life depended on them.

Coupeur du Bois found his first and began to blow on the drinking-straw-thin metal tube. He must have blown too hard. There was no visible effect on the mad-making mosquitoes who continued to cluster blackly on every face. But then Legno and Arbol found theirs and among them somebody must have hit the right note because instantly, like magic, every fiendish Insect went far, far away.

What blessed relief.

Apparently the hole-pierced whistles, when keyed just right, emitted a note, inaudible to coarse human ears, that homed in on the infinitesimal ones of mosquitoes and drove them up the wall. They'd fly miles to escape the agony to their eardrums.

Piping, the woodmen set off along the highway. In their lumber jackets and corduroy pants they also looked pretty "pied" as well.

The 'heart of :downtown Ruby', as they liked to think of it, was spread out over the rise to the left. The new broad road looped along below it. Until shop-opening hours, when they'd try if credit cards could avail anything at banks, bus depots, or boat-hiring agencies, the woodmen thought they'd stay on the road. Hitch-hiking was obviously hopeless but they couldn't sit still for four hours! not amongst these mosquitoes. On the road they could enjoy the vista of the mile-wide Yukon and the even broader expanse of green tundra vegetation that sloped steeply up the range of hills beyond it.

As they hiked along in the dawn solitude they had at least as unsullied a prospect of nature as the earth any longer afforded.

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Unless it be Antarctica or the farthest north reaches of Canada, there were no land areas on the planet any more sparsely populated than the north of Alaska, which began on the other side of the river at their feet. Ground-hugging wildflowers: mountain anemones, buttercups, and ground-sallows made yellow and pink splotches on every hand. Caribou and goats could be seen calmly grazing on the heights. And what was this?: a leggy juvenile moose suddenly appeared from nowhere, loping out of a stretch of muskeg off to the south.

The ten woodmen stopped, the blowing on three soundless flutes stopped - and the moose stopped. Then the mosquitoes started, and everything else restarted immediately as well. The Ozites would have liked to accord respectful awe to the big denizen of the wild so fortuitously appearing but it was impossible. The bugs made them jig in desperation and the pipes were blown furiously.

The moose itself was not undisturbed by the insect plague, but it was something else that primarily moved the animal. It did not stand on ceremony or wait to be politely admired but hurried on in a gangling lollop away from the brushwood and along the road, straight toward the wondering woodmen.

It should be mentioned that when the three pipers blew carelessly they were capable of producing from the six-holed pipes also sounds that they themselves could hear.

The notes, when long continued, were agonizing to their ears but they were, undeniably, musical tones. A sort of three-noted tune could be heard. The other three holes blew notes too high for human hearing.

But that was what the moose seemed drawn by. It came up to within two moose paces of the ten marveling men and then stood wagging its head and lifting its knees, one or two at a time.

It was dancing.

“Good heavens!” cried Bûcheron Arbrisseau, “a musical moose.”