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

<<1952>>

“How fantastic,” breathed Ozma of Oz, almost overcome at the strangeness of the coincidence.

“The Charmed Garden?” Smith had said, more distressed than he would show at word of further hurdles placed between him and the totem he had now so long sought is vain. “Why in the world...?”

“It’s quite incredible, isn’t it?” went on the girl ruler. “You know of the Garden, of course? Glinda—”

“Yes, your highness,” put in the Witch of the South. “Sples was not with us at the period of its ‘discovery’[§] but I have told him the story in detail since then.”

“So you know that your own Magic Umbrella seemed to be a part of the strange, nay, unique web of circumstances there?” Ozma asked the American.

“Yes indeed, your grace. But then all those circumstances were just figments of a dream: pretty real-seeming at the time but afterwards shown to be imaginary.”

“Quite so. But to *become* real,” reminded the Ruler. “We all found the Garden so alluring, so well deserving of being real,

§ See *Charmed Gardens of Oz*. Editor’s note.

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that we set to work to make it so. There were so many witnesses to every detail of the elaborate dream that we had a ready-made blueprint of the area in our minds. In just a few months the entire garden was in place, bounded by the road of yellow bricks, the Munchkin River, and the shrunken remainder of the Deadly Poppy Field.

“Of course all the artifacts that had been noted there, at any rate facsimiles of them, had to be installed. Now you know umbrellas are something rarely used by the inhabitants of this land. Here in E.C., where it almost never rains, the palace has simply not been supplied with umbrellas. We possessed in fact only one. To represent your legendary Magic Umbrella I caused to be sent to the Charmed Garden—your Magic Umbrella!—though I have only found out that fact at this moment!”

Well, they all marveled at the aptness of fate, which had “given in earnest” what they had performed “in jest”. Little remained but to send and relieve from guard duty the fleet and sturdy Sawhorse. The Soldier with the Green Whiskers carried out that task, saw the horse placed within the shafts of the celebrated Red Wagon, and waved off from the sentry box the crowded vehicle as it dashed away on the half-hour run to another gatehouse, that of the fabulous Gardenia.

In that one corner of Oz rains are regular and predictable. If the excursionists had thought about it they might have expected it to be pouring at the moment they pulled up at the grey stone lodge. In the flurry of their impromptu departure, however, no one did think of it. Ozma had hastily to pull from a glove compartment in the side of the wagon thumbrellas to pass around to witch Glinda, the Wizard, the Historian, and the rest. But Sples Smith she playfully sent to beg for charity of the Custodian and Chief Careleaver in the gatehouse lodge, Mar Supial, the Careless Kangaroo.

“Tell her it’s raining,” called the young queen merrily, “and could she lend you a bumbershoot?!” Smith jumped out of the wagon and ran into the shelter of the lodge gate. There he too fell under the spell of the Charmed Garden as glimpsed through

the wrought-iron trellis. Ten years after the first apparition of the lovely park to the enchanted dreamer from a distant land the same blue-green lawns, dotted with exotic plants, stretched to peacock-hued hillocks where placid cows browsed drowsily in the rain. Hazy feather-topped trees marched in the far-middle distance, and away at the horizon beckoned all the mystery and magic of the world: always alluring, never attainable.

Mar had heard the crunch of wagon wheels on gravel and came to the door. Before Sples had a chance to say a word the cheerful kangaroo spotted the crowd of thumbrella-sheltered celebrities in the wagon and bounded out to wave and beckon them in. They could not escape without a cup of her daughter Tronto's celebrated coffee. And there in the cosy kitchen the altered but inimitable Magic Umbrella of him who had been Button-Bright of Philadelphia, lost in the Land of Mo, was restored, thirty-eight years late, to Saladin Paracelsus de Lambertine Evagne von Smith in the heart of the blue-green depths of the land of Oz.

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"Hello! Mr. Smith. And Fanciulla dear: you here?"

The Young Man dropped his newspaper and jumped up from the leather easy chair in the den at the Palace on the Park. Introductions and explanations were made all round. "Darling," said Fanciulla (oh, it hurt William Rapidan to hear it), "these gentlemen — at least, this gentleman — thinks I'm somebody else. It's — it's very bewildering."

"Now then, sir," said Y.M., "what do you mean?"

Speedy told him.

"A princess?" repeated the young man. "I'm not surprised to hear it. Fanciulla's instincts have always been of the most refined... and it has always been my fate to love princesses." He spoke a bit complacently. The Young Man was not above harboring small traces of conceit, courageous though he had proven himself to be. But then, who says one can't be both conceited and brave at the same time?

"Hmm," said Speedy, not overly impressed. Indeed, William Rapidan and the farm-hand-consort had scant basis for losing much love on each other. "In order to get to the bottom of the mystery it seems we should consult a certain magic-worker

named Jrumm. Do you —”

“Jrumm again!” broke in Y.M., disturbed. The enchantress had shown him particular good will on his quest to discover the fifty-tongued bird, but latterly the Young Man had grown disillusioned. The more he found out, the more it appeared he had her to blame in the first place for the restraint under which both the women he loved had lived for years. By now he didn’t know *what* he ought to be feeling for the paradoxical creature.

“We had better consult my wife,” he eventually advised.

“And where may she be?” asked Rapidan, himself feeling mixed emotions. How serious a rival should he count a fellow who, far from being espoused to Speedy’s ‘own’ Gureeda, spoke familiarly of quite another woman as his wife?

“Out in the park,” informed the young man. “I send her there,” he went on airily, “when her singing gets to be a bit much. Now she’s actually begun to talk of taking up a career in opera.” As if that were any bad thing.

So the whole group trailed down the velvet-covered marble stairway and out the front portals to walk across to the great lawns and formal gardens of Scowlgrowl Park. Speedy stared as he trod the gold paving stones of Iron Man Avenue. It reminded him of Oz’s yellow brick road, though the latter had never had a character of anywhere near such grandeur.

“‘Iron Man’?” he said, making conversation as he glanced up at the street sign.

“Reference to an incident in Scowleyow history,” recited Y.M., glad of an opportunity to display the results of his reading and his growing learnedness. “Seems an earlier King Scowleyow — the name is traditional for the regents of the country, which conforms to Salic law — had constructed a giant figure of a man out of cast iron. It was as tall as a church and, not surprisingly, as heavy as iron. King Scowleyow was at war with Mo, a country, including its monarch and all his people, whom he hated very much, and he intended the Iron Man as an instrument of destruction.”

William Rapidan was interested. Mechanics and engineer-

ing had always been his chief preoccupation both as career and hobby. He wanted to hear more, and as the group strolled across the green grass beneath the plane trees (still green too, in a wonderland that did not much concern itself with seasons) the Young Man was pleased to oblige.

"The Man was mechanical. By means of a screw in his left foot: as high as a normal person could in fact reach on the imposing stature of the image—he could be wound up to march in a straight line for a very great distance. Needless to say, his great flapping feet, each as large as a boxcar, flattened everything in their path. That was what the King counted on.

"He sent a dove ahead to alert the Movian Monarch as to what to expect and then settled down to wait until Mo and all it contained had been flattened. Then he could take over. I believe he was partial to ruling flat countries.

"Alas, plans went awry. By some means still not fully clear to us here in the land of Scowleyow the Monarch of Mo was able to get the great Cast-Iron Man turned around and headed back to its native country. Once arrived back home, the Iron Man stepped on Scowleyow and all his innocent people. It seems that, very slow-moving, they did not take care to get out of the way.

"His mission accomplished, the mighty Cast-Iron Man stalked on to the sea, and into it. As he walked on, inevitably the water rose higher and higher around him. When his wind-up energy ran down he remained standing, his visage half sunk beneath the waves. The first great storm afterwards toppled him. Now on a clear day from a glass-bottomed boat one can see, full forty fathoms down, the fallen figure. Round the decay of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare, the lone and level muds stretch far away," Y.M. paraphrased appositely.

"Thanks," said Bill Rapidan. "I'd like to get a look at that mechanical man one day."

"I suppose you might," allowed the young man. "Our present king is at this very date at the coast, organizing a salvage operation. He plans to have the great figure re-erected right in this park, as a monument to vanished glories."

"And defeats?" said Speedy.

"Those too, I suppose. The King is rather patriotic. I think he has some idea of erasing the memory of those defeats, though not quite by the further use of any cast-iron men in war-making."

The group had now come within earshot of a very pretty sound. It seemed to be a soprano voice singing a lyric at once recognizable by persons knowing Italian: this, alas, did not include any of the present party...:

"C'è là in fondo Parigi: Parigi che ci grids, con mille voci liete, il suo fascin' immortal!"

Wonderful song, rousingly rendered, although the tenor part seemed represented only by a faint, not very musical, squeaking of a bird. "Bertie!" Fanciulla was heard to cry, and even the Soldier with the Green Whiskers seemed struck.

But the lovely voice was not through. It seemed to issue from behind a towering bank of rhododendrons (not, however, in bloom in October, even in the land of Scowleyow). The words carried clearly:

"I used to dream that I would discover
The perfect lover
Some day.
I knew I'd recognize him if ever
He came round
My way.
I always used to fancy then
He'd be one of the godlike kind of men
With a giant brain and a noble head
Like the heroes bold in the books I read
But—
Along came Bill...§"

And along came Bill (Speedy) Rapidan: he rounded the corner of the rhododendrons and looked full into the face (with auburn locks) of Pat of Eighth Avenue and Miss Jane of Ringwood.

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The Princess looked pleased and Speedy looked thunderstruck.

Raising her finger for a little dickey bird to hop upon it from her shoulder the lady advanced to meet the group who had stopped short beside the rhododendrons.

Nobody knew who should speak first but then the Princess said, "Well, aren't you going to say Hello?", quoting from a favorite film of the forties.

Speedy knew the moment was extraordinary. He didn't want to spoil it by saying anything banal. A whole lot fell into place in his mind and he had made great strides in comprehension when he finally spoke and said, "It was you, wasn't it?" Then he suddenly blushed brightly.

The Princess' laughter was like a brilliant cadenza, each note a glass raindrop falling on sheerest taut metal. "I wanted you to think that! It was the easiest way to get talking. I needed to get to know you — with instant intimacy, so to say. And you were a perfect gentleman. I wanted to find that out too."

Speedy remembered some of the colloquialisms he had used on Eighth Avenue and only continued to blush. But after all he

HAD behaved discreetly. Strange: it was devotion to another girl that had kept him from advances to one who was so much more—But what was he thinking! Before his mind led him into even further gaffes there was a great deal he must find out and he'd better start getting some answers.

"Who are you, madam?" he blurted. "And how did you..? In a word, I'm wordless. Please tell me what's going on!"

The princess lifted a hand to indicate a red and yellow blanket that lay on the grass some yards away. "Shall we?" she invited. "I sometimes bring that along when sent out," she explained, "—to sing so as not to forfeit my supper." Here she glanced at the young Man roguishly.

The party of six (seven with Bert the bird) sat down around the coverlet. Turning to Saladin von Smith, the Princess began, "It is good to see you again, Mr. Smith. I'm sorry we didn't get to acknowledge our acquaintance in New York or in Hampshire. Circumstances were of course not optimum. But I felt you recognized me."

"Not in New York, no," said Sples. "You only 'reminded' me of someone. Put at Ringwood I was sure. It was curiously comforting. But I didn't want to blow your cover. When you made no sign..."

"It was most sensitive of you. No, I couldn't speak or explain. I was still reconnoitring, and dared not complicate things by clarifying—"

"Clarifying what?" broke in Bill Rapidan impatiently. "How could you be a New York street-walker—or at least give the perfect impression—and also a Welsh lodging-house keeper in England? Wigs could account for hair changes but the accent, the intimate knowledge of background—"

"Magic can do anything," stated the princess calmly. "I had fifty wishes and all of them potent as could be. Seated one day at the organ—this was over in Dad's royal palace—wary and ill at ease, I made a wish. You see, I had learned, somewhat belatedly: only thirty-six year!, that I had the power to get my dearest desires fulfilled. I took care not to abuse the privilege but it

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could surely not be an abuse to ask to see the one I would one day—well, that is, the man I was destined to—well, become very good friends with.

“I arranged my wish so that I would appear to that man in a guise that would seem to him completely natural. For that, of course I would need to blend with the background as to appearance, speech, range of knowledge. It worked. That’s all. It was very gratifying for me. To know what the future held—and that it was so nice.” Now it was the princess’ turn to blush.

Speedy didn’t know what to feel. He was by no means displeased to have made an apparently agreeable impression on one so attractive. But then again: to have his future sewed up, with no consultation as to HIS wishes...? Well, for now he’d play it cool. Coolly, but not coldly, he said, “The ‘wishes’ you mention: may we hear about them? How could you discover thirty-six years late that you had such a gift? And how does it work?”

“Can you believe it?: the one who gave me the power never bothered to let me know! I had to find it out by accident: trial and error. Not being, I suppose, an individual given to vain unarticulated longing and wishing, I let decades go by before I discovered it. But it’s just like her, the queer old thing: her gifts seem like curses, her damnations turn out to be blessings.”

“Who is ‘she’?” they all asked. One or two knew already.

“Why, Jrumm, the great witch and secret eminence grise of Scowleyovian affairs!”

“Please explain,” they pleaded.

The princess set herself to rights on the red and yellow blanket. “Jrumm came to this country many years ago. It seems she’d had an unhappy marriage elsewhere—”

“‘Unhappy!’” broke in the Soldier with the Green Whiskers impulsively, feeling rightfully aggrieved. “It wasn’t for lack of walking all over her husband!” Then his friends explained to the princess just who Omby Amby was and how the woman he had been married to for what seemed like far too many years had been testy, to say the least, and made his life a purgatory

with her terrible temper.

“Yes,” agreed the princess. “I’ve seen her little fits of rage too. I can well believe what you say. And yet at times she can be surprisingly benevolent. You know that, Y.M.”

“Yes,” confirmed the princess’ husband. “If she takes a liking to you. For some reason she seemed to like me. I never knew why. Not even sure I deserved it,” he admitted in a show of attractive candor.

“But to continue,” said the princess.. “It isn’t known just why she came to Scowleyow and Mo. Those years are shrouded in mystery. But she seems to have had a man in her life still, for there is the evidence that she had—has—a son...” They talked about the long-suffering Hrae stevrod (if to be a horse is to suffer), who still lived in his mother’s vicinity.

“And where is that?” Speedy wanted to know. It began to look as if an interview at that address was going to be imperative.

“Oh, a day’s journey from here, in the land of Mo,” the princess informed. “For some reason she still lives beside that old-fashioned bakehouse far from the amenities of civilization. I don’t know how she gets the time to pass, clever creature that she really is. You’d think she would be bored to death. But there are mysteries in her life. I have the feeling that what various ones of us have learned are just the tip of the iceberg.”

“Hm,” contributed Sples Smith. “I knew Jrumm was a clever sorceress. But my impression from last summer was that there was little love lost between you two. Now you say that it was she who gave you the gift of granted wishes. How did that come about? and how did you find it out, Princess?—if we may ask.”

“Yes, indeed. It just came out in conversation! Doesn’t that seem strange? It was after you left us so surprisingly, just at the spot, and in the same manner, as you first found us. As we continued our journey home I was entertaining the others by granting little wishes for them, as I had gradually learned that I could do. To my amazement dame Jrumm burst into a dreadful temper fit and shrieked at me, quite forgetting my

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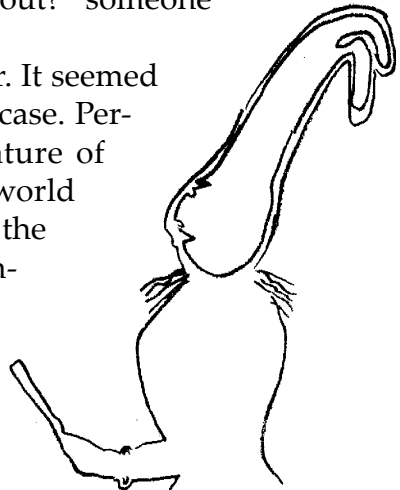
exalted place as an hereditary princess. She commanded me to hold my tongue and to stop throwing away my wishes! There were only fifty of them, and how many had I wantonly wasted already?

“Well, naturally the whole story had to come out then. I remembered since the time it happened that Jrumm had turned me at the tender age of seven into a mockingbird. Thus I remained for thirty-five years! until my kind husband here well-meaningly spirited me away from the castle where I was kept closely guarded. Then I returned to my life at my father’s court, and the rivalry between the King and the powerful enchantress was laid to rest.

“The strange woman now revealed that she had regretted that I, an innocent bystander, had had to suffer as a pawn in my father’s game of power politics. To try to make it up to me, when she created me the so-called Fifty-Tongued Bird, she gave me a wish for each ‘tongue’ or birdsong. She just. didn’t bother to tell me! But of course on hindsight I can see why. If I had known, naturally I’d have wished my enchantment and exile undone at a stroke, and so have returned home in triumph, with forty-nine wishes to the good. Where would Jrumm’s revenge on my father be then?” The Princess ended with a merry laugh at the posited situation.

“What were they quarreling about?” someone wanted to know.

“Oh, that was never made clear. It seemed to be just one of the givens of the case. Perhaps it was an example in miniature of states of affairs in, for example, world politics. One might ask: “Why do the French hate the Germans? the English the Irish?, the Americans their native Indians?’ There’s no sensible answer. They just do—and millions have to suffer to perpetuate the nonsense.”



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I dare say the good and beautiful Princess might have resolved all remaining problems and mysteries by just passing a potent wish. But wouldn't that be dull!

Let's do it this way. Let us say that during King Scowleyow's temporary sojourn at the coast his daughter exercised a certain limited power as regent at the capital. At the very least she had the power to order out a coach and four, so that, having spent a luxurious night in the royal palace, the party very early the next morning could board and be off. Away they rattled over the cobblestones out of the city and soon they were all where they were most used to being: upon the road, pursuing a quest.

The princess planned it in that way because she wanted time to sit in a cushioned corner and devote herself entirely to getting to know William Rapidan better. Even more to the point, she wanted to let him get to know her. She knew she had not failed to make an impression in New York and also in England. Those, however, were mere brief flights of tempting mystery for her chosen swain. They were scarcely sufficient basis for causing him to forsake all others and to kneel before her sceptre and to swear allegiance to her lips, her eyes, her hair.

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How could they be, after all? "My beautiful Princess," whispered the lover, "I set out to find and cherish someone else. I've told you all about her—and there she sits!" Speedy gestured with an eyebrow to the seat opposite, where Fanciulla was seen to be hanging on the arm and every word of the well-content Young Man. "I know she seems all wrapped up in your husband but that's only because she's lost her memory. As soon as that's restored, everything will be different. You do see? She'll want to return to her sorrowing friends on Umbrella Island, and I have thought that I would be there to see it all come true."

"It's a pretty story, sorely," agreed the lady. "Would that it may come true! But just the same..." She hummed a little tune: the Intermezzo from *Cavalleria* and looked out the window at the autumn foliage, while William worried. Silly fellow. He couldn't make up his mind which way to go: the way of duty ('duty'?: to love and be true at last to his true love?) or the way of inclination.

His dilemma was just two thirds as great as that of Dick/Bert, the bird, now also being called "Berbir" by his restored old comrade of stirring adventures along the road, Wantowin Battles. As they bounced along the two were deep in reminiscences. In the nature of things Bert could no longer dream of having restored to him the fifty-tongued bird to whom he had plighted his devotion. Therefore he was exercised to try to decide which of three *human* friends he should cast in his faithful lot with. Should it be the fond pal of that early quest? or his fifty-tongued love in her human guise? or his latest loving companion, the girl Fanciulla?

Something told him none of the three was going to drop everything and have him as best-loved friend. He'd chirp a cracked note and take whatever fate would bring.

Bert noticed Sples Smith in the caddy corner, looking rather left out. He flew to him and said, "Whatcah doin'?"

"Oh, just thinking." Sples tuned to glance, bemused, at the dickey bird on his shoulder.

"What about?"

“We’ve heard that a King Scowleyow sent off a cast-iron man to attack Mo but that things misfired and the giant returned and crushed ‘Scowleyow and all his people’. And yet there’s still a ‘King Scowleyow’ ruling a country of the same name—and no dearth of people that I could see.”

“Oh, I think the chronicler wrote symbolically. As a matter of fact,” Bert could relate, “it does appear that quite a crowd of the king’s retainers gathered round him at the crucial moment, to protect him, or be protected by him. At the fall of the great iron foot they perished with him. That included all the great magnates and grandees of the court. Perhaps the historian felt that when they went they took everything. But naturally there were rustics hiding out in nooks and crannies about the kingdom and when they presently found that the coast was clear they came out and proliferated, so before very long Scowleyow was a populated country as before.”

“And this present King Scowleyow? who doesn’t sound like any great improvement over the former one.”

“Oh, the name is traditional. All kings in Scowleyow take the name of the country as their own.

This one’s Scowleyow the Twelfth. He’s just a petty chieftain who when he noticed the throne empty claimed it for his own. He’s a person of no learning and low motivations, who knows no better than to imitate all the baseness he’s heard related of the former king.”

Smith laughed. “Sounds like a grand fella. And yet he was father to the really charming Princess there?”

“There’s a mystery about her birth. Nothing seems known about where and when she was born. She was not so very long at court before she disappeared again, leaving just an echo of her great beauty and goodness—which soon became a legend. I suppose that in contrast to her father anyone would seem ‘good’. As for her beauty, that’s easily explained, for her father, despite his character, was quite an unusually handsome man. He’s getting on in years now, of course.”

“Well, it will be interesting to hear what the woman Jrumm

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has to relate. I hope she won't fly into one of her fits when she's asked to come clean."

"Who knows?" said Bert with a shrug. "She's powerful enough, I gather, to turn us all into cow chips if we cross her. We'll have to be on best behavior."

Others had the same forebodings. It was a rather sombre carriageload that presently drew up before the door of the country bake shop and looked out with trepidation.

The good and beautiful princess, who was also smart, had sense enough to use up a wish.

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<<1952>>

“And that’s how it all began, my dears. And that’s how it all began!”

Jrumm was in mellow mood and I guess she felt (helped by a powerful but unsuspected suggestion) that if she was ever going to tell anyone what she had been up to all these years, now was the time. They were all there. Her ex(durn it!)-husband—but he was again appearing as the timid green-bearded jerk she had tired of ages before, and she quickly came to the conclusion that the bold yeoman in his blue period whom she had briefly admired as just a mirage; she would put her revenge yen into mothballs. There was the lovely, still young-appearing Princess whom she had so wronged for so many years (but had tried to make it up to in devious ways). The venturesome Young Man whom she didn’t quite know why she favored so—or yes, she did!: he was like herself, risking all in trying boldly to take what he wanted. There was another princess, as it now seemed her visitors all belatedly knew: a princess who had also endured years of enforced servitude. And a couple of American adventurers, as well as a little dickey bird. All of them, except maybe the young man and one of the Americans, had suffered at her

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hands and now was the time to brag about it and demonstrate to them just how all-powerful she had been.

The sorceress had just been describing her failed marriage with Wantowin G. Battles He had been properly put in his place as the feckless feeble fearful fellow he was. ("Thank goodness!" he breathed with a sigh of relief. Now he could return to his dear Tollydiggle, who *liked* ambitionless time-servers and gate-watchmen, with no fear he was going to be claimed at some least expected moment by this awful wife. He'd always known she was a witch! even before she became one.)

"Then one day," Jrumm went on, "the King of Scowleyow came to pay a state visit in the Emerald City. There was a handsome man. At least he was in those days—and I fell for him pladask. I was turning back the bedcovers in the Royal Visitors' Suite in the Palace of Magic when he came in unexpectedly and caught me at my work. He chucked me 'neath the chin and daldied with me. Who could resist? or wanted to? A handsome king, and I hopelessly espoused to one who would never be more than a titular Standing Army.

"Suddenly—I didn't know how I got there but there I was—within the bed whose covers I'd turned back all unsuspectingly half an hour before. When the royal party left the palace I stowed away in the baggage train. Thus I came to Scowleyow."

Everyone looked shocked and most interested and waited for their hostess to continue. She ordered Pernille to go round with the Pouilly Fuissè again and recommended the crisp crackling on the roast of pork.

"When King Scowleyow discovered I was still with him he was as pleased as his vexation allowed him to be. For a time I lived a life of back stairs and attic hideaways as I enjoyed the royal favor—when no one was looking. That couldn't last, no doubt. My early dreams proved vain: that I might at least become a wife of the left hand. My honor, such as it was, had been sacrificed, and for what? A passle of brats!" The witch laughed harshly.

"But that was not yet. First Scowleyow, scowling as usual

and living up to his name, devised a quarrel with me. Though I, still enamored, was prepared to forgive him anything he took advantage of the heat of the row to send me packing. I was horrified! What as to become of me? and in my condition. But there as nothing for it. I must needs gather my few belongings in a sack and go. Sore at heart, without even a crust to see me through, I set out on the long road, none knew whither. I walked for days, starving.

“But I was not the type to curl up and die. Thank goodness I had my temper! I swore that I was going to live through this and when it was over I’d never be hungry again. If I had to lie and cheat, steal and kill, as God was my witness I’d never be hungry again.

“Well, I had a bit of luck. As I struggled along the road, crossing into Mo, the country of my exile, I saw an old woman sitting on a rock. As I approached, she, a woman, though it was early days, realized my condition. She took pity on me. It ended with her taking me home with her to a little hut in the forest where she lived with her ‘Old Man’, as she called him.

“She tended me and I stayed there through long months until my twins were born—” ‘Twins!’ marveled her listeners. “And the time was not wasted. For this little old woman was the Grandmother of All Witches. She had been a great one in her day. Kings had trembled at her word and sorcerers had come from far and near to study at her feet. But now, weary of the world and its pomps, she had retired with her old husband to the forest to live out her life in harmless nut-gathering and charcoal-burning.

“When I learned her story and was interested, she had no objection to taking me as her last pupil and teaching me all her arts. I was not slow in turning pebbles into jewels and so was able to pay a competent midwife when my time came. This woman too found it in her heart to pity me. But alas, in my time of travail it seems I repeatedly shrieked out the name of the king of Scowleyow as the author of my woes.

“No sooner had the children been born than the midwife

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made off to the palace of the King and reproached him for his neglect of me. But the effect was not what she had intended. King Scowleyow flew into a towering rage and turned the woman out of doors incontinently, though not before she had heard him shriek orders for the instant mustering of his elite corps of headsmen!

Frantic, the woman rode through the night to find me, soon after dawn, gone to the well in the lane, with my little son slung from my back. I dropped the bucket; I remember it splashed and filled my wooden shoes. I bade the midwife hasten to the hut and warn the old grandmother. Then when she was out of sight

I turned my child into a colt. I knew that a fortnight-old horse could fend for itself, as a two-weeks' child could not. I drove my darling boy off into the forest: better to take his chances there than risk what seemed his certain fate if the king caught him.

"When as soon as I could I reached the hut it was in flames. I found the old couple hiding under a stone in the kitchen garden. The Grandmother of Witches had turned them into centipedes in the moment of emergency. As for the midwife, her fate is unknown; I never saw her again. Nor of course my daughter—not for some years—"

"Your daughter', madam?" someone exclaimed.

"Yes, of course; she sits yonder there. You call her the Princess."

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

<<1952>>

You can imagine the consternation.

“‘Mother’?” said the princess, aghast, and didn’t want to believe. This awful woman as mother? Or was she perhaps quite *so* awful? Jrumm? whom everyone had reason to dislike and yet somehow didn’t *quite* dislike? This woman with her fits of violent temper and thieving ways and yet with unpredictable bursts of generosity? This woman who, though not aged or hideous, could not be imagined as ever young and fair.

Still, it figured. Or at least it didn’t not figure. No one else had ever been suggested for the role of mother to the Princess. At Scowleyow’s court she had been known as the daughter of her father the King and that seemed to be sufficient ancestry for anyone.

But what a lot of questions the revelation raised. When the excited babble died down Jrumm Went on: “Contrary to our fears Scowleyow did not kill his daughter but carried her in triumph to his court, where he doted on her and soon began to give out that she was a miracle of beauty and goodness. One wonders why he stressed the latter quality, he who was so ungood himself and who seemed to care not at all to be thought

good. Perhaps he believed public devotion to the image of his child would deflect some of his own unpopularity.

The old couple and I refuged west and built this place. For a period I licked my wounds and bided my time. With new determination and energy I threw myself into the study of witchcraft. The first of my concerns was to erect a shield around my remaining child and so I built that 'puzzle' stable in the forest. I filled it with mice turned into magnificent horses to be companions to my son, who by birth was no more of a horse than they.

"By great good fortune the poor midwife at court had uttered no more than 'Your woman has given birth -' before Scowleyow pressed the rage button. He never knew there were two children. He still does not suspect he has a son. That son, for his own protection, has had to remain a horse all this time. Latterly I have had him near me but never in the character of human son. What if word reached the King of this man—and potential rival—who so resembles him?.. I have sometimes, while he slept, turned Hræstevrod back briefly, just to see. As like as brothers!

"Seven years passed before I felt sure enough of my powers to face the King. I demanded reinstatement as mother of the famed and praised princess. He laughed in my face. The rest you know." Thus abruptly the woman's tale ended.

As her hearers thought it over they realized they did know the rest. What had seemed to all a cruel enchantment was seen now as protective coloration for the daughter whom the wronged mother wished to remove from the influence of the evil king until such time as a bold rescuer might come to her aid with resourcefulness enough to take his place as future and sufficient protector to the girl. That he was a plebeian with some claim to conceit and pretentiousness was not held to matter much. That the Princess could not love him might be thought a graver lack.

"But now all that's settled?" Jrumm took up the word again, addressing her daughter and son-in-law, "and each of you has settled on someone new and more to your taste?"

Here she beamed round on her relations and relations (hopably)-to-be. Suddenly her face fell. She was looking at Fanciulla. Admittedly the girl was no more than the light-o'-love of what, if all went well, was to be the witch's ex-son-in-law, but just the same she felt a bit ill at ease. She decided, now that, years belatedly, she had got into a mood for confession, to make a totally clean breast of it.

Jrumm leaned across the table and took the girl's surprised hand. "My daughter," she said, "I only seemed to abuse. You, my poor girl, I truly did an injustice."

This was what William Rapidan had been waiting for. He and those who shared his concerns. Sples Smith slowly and thoughtfully twirled a wine glass. He believed he knew something of what was coming.

"Do you remember," the witch addressed the company, "how, last summer, I would not have you pass by way of the court of the Movian monarch? I found sophistries for my advice but the truth is that I did not want the Monarch to catch a glimpse of you, Miss Fanciulla. He would have recognized you as the lost girl that your people of the aerial island hung around Mo for a year in search of.

"Yes, I was in the Mo capital the time Umbrella Island and its King, your father, paid an official visit. I was not, however, invited to that famous ball. What, I, powerful sorceress though I was, to appear among the noble ones as the rejected mistress of an unpopular foreign king? The Monarch of Mo did not approve.

"Furious, I hung around outside the banqueting hall. I saw you come out to take the air. How pretty you were! in your costume of a pert chambermaid. You reminded me of, though much prettier than, the serving wenches I employed at the Dragon Castle, where my daughter was interned.

"Suddenly I had an inspiration. The very thing! I thought. There was an extra place available among the tweenies. If I could not go to the ball I could certainly ruin the ball. Quick as thought I removed your memory.

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“Afterwards it was an easy thing to send to the castle and order henchmen to come and fetch you. I did not allow your memory to begin to function again until you were safely in the cart and away —”

Princess Reeda was looking as angry as it was possible for a sensible young woman, very well-read, to look.

“‘Allow my memory to function,’ you said;” she spoke icily. “What must I do to get you to allow my memory of all my early life to come back to me? I find I need it now!” She looked aside to Speedy Rapidan, who had said such puzzling things.

The witch had the grace to look abashed. “Are we through here?” she asked the party round the dining table. “Then, if you will go with me into my laboratory room I shall try to make some adjustments.”

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

<<1952>>

The others waited on stools and a bench in the passage while mysteries were performed inside witch Jrumm's sanctuary. Then a great cry was heard. A moment later the door was snatched open and the sobbing face of Princess Gureeda was seen as she rushed out, then froze, in additional consternation. Whom was she to run to?!

Her friends all stood gaping between two worlds. Some had no claim on her: General Battles and Saladin von Smith and the good and beautiful "other Princess". But the Young Man and William Rapidan and Bert the Bird were all heart-anchored to the girl, and clearly she could not belong to all three.

She paused for one second: the second during which one of them should have claimed her forever. Then she ran to the now vacated bench and threw herself down on it to weep distractedly.

Bert the bird, good little creature, flew to her head and perched on it. "Whatcha doin' *now*?" he piped in distress.

Gureeda raised her flaming face and sobbed, "Crying my eyes out!"

"Why?!" they all exclaimed.

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“Because I don’t know what to do! I remember everything—and it’s awful!”

This was a facer. Everyone had the distinct impression she’d wanted her memory back. Indeed, they had all heard her demand it in no uncertain terms. But memory is a strange thing. It, and dreams, are two phenomena psychologists and physiologists can never convincingly explain.

Psychological exegesis concerning memory: Given the chance to have memory restored, no one would ever fain remain an amnesiac, even if aware that what memory would recall would be painful. Memory rejection is like abdicating a part of our personality, which is a thing we all cling to, dreadful as it may be. Or again, memory is like one of our limbs. Ugly and full. of pain as any member of our body may be, we scream against losing it.

What Gureeda recalled was not “awful”: only the knowledge of the loss of it was so. The charming ball where she had lanced and been feted. The jolly journey of Umbrella Island to call on its fellow kingdom,

Her dear old Dad, the king, and all his fat counselors. The good people of the beautiful and unique land of Umbrellia. Her tried and true and incredible companion, Terrybubble, the live dinosaur skeleton. Her books! and the Royal Library on the flying island. And her dreams—oh, good gracious, Speedy! the boy from Long Island!

She looked around wildly for him. But all she saw was a somewhat rugged-looking thirty-two-year-old businessman: quite an attractive fellow, really, but a stranger to her. Beside him stood another man, someone she’d loved and longed for for years—and also recognized. Gureeda-Fanciulla jumped up, with the bird still in her hair. She flew to his side and made him her own, or all through her life she’d have dreamed on alone.

With a secret imperceptible sigh of relief Speedy Rapidan turned to the Princess from Scowleyow and smiled.

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

<<1952>>

Witch Jrumm belonged among the great number of people who think, when you have done something really bad and then kept it a deep secret for years, that when you afterwards confess it that makes it all right. Curious way of thought and so wide-spread. So now she supposed that, having revealed the great wrong she had done the Umbrellian princess, everything was going to be hunky-dory between them. Funny. It didn't work out that way.

Gureeda-Fanciulla flew to her young man's side and her momentum carried the two of them away, out of the house and up the hillside. Speedy and the other Princess followed after, hand in hand, more leisurely.

Jrumm found herself alone in the hallway with the two she'd really been wanting to talk to ever since the unexpected arrival of the carriage from Scowleyow. She shrugged as the door slammed, without backward glances, after the departing couples. Then she turned to Sples Smith and Wantowin Battles.

The latter trembled and the former looked stern. That didn't stop Jrumm. She was out after something and she adopted an ingratiating manner. "Oh, now they've gone away, and you are

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near me," she quoted, sprightly. "How I hope that you will hear me!"

"We're listening," said Sples gravely. "There's still a lot that needs explaining."

"Oh?" The witch paused. "What else did you want to know?"

"Never mind, for the moment. You were going to say...?"

"That I observe that each of you gentlemen is carrying something!"

The umbrellas!

"Yes," the woman went on. "And since both of them are mine I would request most earnestly that you return them to me."

Sples Smith uttered harsh laughter and even Omby Amby dared to titter nervously.

"Liar!" barked the American, "—and thief!"

A nice return for hospitality extended! For once the witch showed dismay. She knew of old that her ex-husband was a cowardly pushover. Also from her brief acquaintance with the adult Sples Smith three months before she supposed him to be somewhat gormless and ineffectual. This didn't sound like it.

"Wh-why, what do you mean?" she stammered.

"This has been confession day," recalled the visitor, "and general-revelation-of-identities evening. I think it's time for one more. Do you know who I am?"

"Yes, of course. The man who appeared to us so unexpectedly on the bank of the Milk River—and then disappeared from a similar riverbank similarly mysteriously, after stealing my precious umbrella!" Here the witch made a grab for it.

"Hah-hah!" shouted Sples in sudden great glee. Here was the proof at last! For the umbrella which, with a retaining grasp of iron, he had thrust behind his back, was of course his own Magic Umbrella, stolen (then too) from the Philadelphia attic. And how would the witch know to make a pass at that object unless she recognized it as having once been in her possession?

"*There,*" stated Smith, "is 'your precious umbrella'." He gestured toward the old yellow bumbershoot of the Wicked Witch of the West, which General Battles held clutched with both

arms around it. "At least: the umbrella we've just been talking about, the one I took away with me from the bank of the river of root beer."

"Which *you*—*stole!*" shrieked the sorceress, launching at last into one of her fury fits.

"Oh, no," said Sples quietly. "Repossessing oneself of one's own belongings is by no definition theft."

"It *wasn't* your own belonging! It was mine, and I needed it. I've missed it so."

"Like I dare say you needed and missed my own umbrella—" Here Smith briefly displayed the powerful Philadelphia instrument, "after you first stole it and made it 'your own'."

"Nonsense! It's not yours. How could it be? Until this idiot here—" Jrumm indicated her quaking husband. "took it away, presumably in mistake for the other one, it had been in my possession since I—er, borrowed it from another little idiot, a witless American boy—" She stopped abruptly.

"A little blond idiot you found asleep in a field by the Scowleyow border?" asked Smith sweetly. "A little idiot you sheltered under your crystal cloak when it came on to rain?"

"Why, how could you—? I've never told a soul."

"You didn't need to. I could recall it all on my own. I was the little blond idiot."

"You!?" The witch gasped. "How could you be? You're dark—swarthy—like a gypsy. He was pale blond."

"I had an encounter with a treacle well^s. But never mind that. I'm he who was the feckless Button-Bright. And you, madam, are a thief—and a liar. I see now that everything you told me that first time I trustingly traveled with you was lies. That business about the dragons: missing in one place and turning up in another. That wasn't strange to you, as you pretended. You'd done it all yourself, though heaven knows for what reasons—"

"To protect my children! With my powers I was able to shift the dragons, to guard my son who was to be found much nearer the vengeful King Scowleyow. My daughter for the time was

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

safer: in the shape of a bird and far away on the western Mo frontier. And with you left to watch out for her.”

“How ironical,” scoffed the former Button-Bright in surprisingly acid mood, “victimize me and then con me into being your assistant. I was a gullible little idiot, right enough. Lucky for me I was also just selfish enough to watch out for my own best interests and leave the Dragon castle. Who knows what further and worse battenning on me you might have done? So it was a real pleasure to ‘steal’ back an umbrella from you last summer—even if it was only a substitute for the one you stole. And now we’re even.” Sples folded his arms, with the umbrella well fixed within them, and smirked.

“Not quite even!” yelled Jrumm. “I’m the most powerful sorceress in Mo—not counting Grandma—and I haven’t forgotten my powers. Take that! and tha!” Here the witch performed a cabalistic gesture employing both arms and a knee, and waited for both her adversaries to drop dead or wake up in Little America. They stayed where they were.

“What the —!!” croaked Jrumm and ran through the routine again.

“Save your breath, and energy,” directed Sples Smith. “It won’t work.”

The witch’s fury mounted, her bafflement adding to it.

“Here we see,” taught Smith, “the drawback of ever doing anything generous. It seems you gave your ‘daughter’—so you claim—the good and beautiful Princess, some wishes to make up, as it were, for her long and dreary transformation as a cage bird. In good time she used one of them today to provide that nothing you might happen to try against any of her party to their detriment would be effective. Congratulations. I see the quality of the wishes you give out is first-rate.”

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

<<1952>>

The lover couples ran up the hill and there in the starlit hour they found their erstwhile companion and steed, Hræ stevrod, grazing on asphodels in the dark. The immortal flower was native to Elysium but Jrumm, who by now had connections most places, had managed to get some cuttings. Though she kept him in the guise of a horse she really thought nothing was too good for her son and she provided the best fodder.

The dun horse glowed very faintly under the stars and none had any trouble making him out. "Vrod!" whispered the Princess urgently. The horse whinnied.

"Old comrade," called the Young Man low.

"Good horse," cried she who had been Fanciulla. "Do you remember us?"

Speedy, who had not been introduced, said nothing. "Hræ stevrod," spoke the Scowleyovian princess again. But it is hard suddenly to accept a horse as your brother, and especially your twin, and she didn't know how to continue.

Then, mysteriously, it came to the four that they would not tell him yet: that they would wait and make it a proper occasion. But certainly they wanted the man-horse with them in what

they all now felt to be an imperative action to be taken before they could, at last, start living happily ever after: a confrontation with the wayward King of Scowleyow.

They gathered around the loyal and relatively patient animal and laid their plans. "If only we could get them to agree somehow," said the Princess, meaning the King and the witch, her parents. "There's the non-aggression pact, of course, but it doesn't seem to have meant there's any love lost between them. They're such prickly natures, both of them, and it makes everything so awkward for everyone around them. Who could actually say he loves either of the two?"

And this was odd because the good princess had always been supposed to be the favorite of her father. "No," she said to any raised eyebrows there were in the dark. "I scarcely remember him from my childhood. Was he fond? Did he pet and play with me? I don't recall. But since my return from enchantment he's been as grumpy as a boiled owl. He hated my marriage, and couldn't conceal his delight when it didn't work out."

Here she looked toward her ex-husband-to-be but she couldn't see what expression he wore, if any. "I wonder," she finished, "if he's a person anyone *could* love."

"Madam Jrumm maintains she did," reminded Speedy.

"But the hatred that replaced that love is what brought all of us to our present pass," someone also reminded.

"Never mind." The Young Man as usual now took command. "We've got to get the two of them together and settle matters once and for all. It'll be sticky. There's got to be the divorce and some new weddings and none of that can take place without the King's consent and indeed participation."

There was no dissent. The party, Hræ stevrod and all, returned to the house. They were in time to see witch Jrumm hopping with thwarted fury and Sples Smith still looking smug.

"Ah, there you are!" screamed the sorceress and began to try to hex or rehex or unhex the Princess. However, she ought to have had more sense than that. If you are going to have the power to grant effective wishes—and we have seen that Jrumm's were

top-quality—you cannot also deactivate such wishes once expressed. The princess had wished that none of “her” party could henceforth be worked on to their cost by any magic that Jrumm might employ. That wish held. All that Jrumm could hope for was that, by good behavior, she could move her daughter to pass another wish restoring the witch’s own magic capabilities. Therefore she was now prepared to wheedle.

“Madam,” said the Princess. (She couldn’t call an awful old witch “Mother”.) “We most urgently request your consent to go with us back to Scowleyow, there to confront ... the King. Our tale of woes and wanderings has gone on long enough. We need your voice, and, it may be, your power” —perhaps a hint of restitution flung out for Jrumm to gnaw on?” —to persuade King Scowleyow to grant what we require.”

“And what might that be?” whined the witch, trying hard to damp her rage and not lose any more ground by untimely temper tantrums.

“A resolution of our legal and social states: divorce for me and my husband, and remarriage for us both.”

“Hah!” The eye of Jrumm gleamed brilliantly. Indeed, here was a chance to assert her power—of knowledge, if not of witchcraft. It would be a treat to make old Scowleyow squirm. Upon the impulse she agreed. “We’ll start at dawn.” she declared, and clapped her son-horse on the muzzle.

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

There he was now! Standing by the shore with his earls about him and, like Canute, commanding the waves.

Unlike Canute, however, who ironically bade the sea retreat and then turned, with wet feet, to his supporters and said, "There, you see?: I can *not*, as you pretend, order the waves about," Scowleyow actually thought he *could* tell the sea what to do. Thus had his court magicians conned him. They had in fact, been able to bring off one or two little prestidigitations and on the basis of those the king was ready to believe anything of their power.

There too were the four magicians, one for each point of the compass, standing about a quadripod and adding pepper and salt to the saltpeter, sulphur, and dried newts' eyes which already smouldered in the pan. Now and again one cast a glance out to sea to see if anything was happening there.

The arrival of the coach crowded with enemies and relations provided a diversion. The king didn't know whether to flit or go blind. All these were people he disliked and had abused, with the possible exception of his daughter, or else people he *could* dislike and abuse but first he'd have to get to know them and you couldn't do that by incontinently ordering them cast in irons. He suffered them to approach.

The first that there did greet his stranger soul was Bert the Bird who flew to perch on the point of his sceptre and chirp, "Whatcha doin'?"

Scowleyow smiled. Can you imagine? No one in history had ever seen him do that before. It was magical how it softened and illuminated his face and brought out the beauty that all agreed it had possessed when he was young.

"Why, little bird," he announced genially, "I'm commanding the waves to roll back and reveal to me the figure of the great Cast Iron Man which my predecessor designed to conquer the land of Mo."

"Are you going to conquer Mo?"

"Not immediately, no. My first intention is to restore the figure and set it up as a monument in Scowlgrowl Park. Of course it would then be in working order in case I ever should need to conquer Mo."

"Oh, good. Can we watch?" requested Bert.

"Why, I suppose so. If you stay well out of the way and don't try to interfere." Here Scowleyow nodded grumpily at the others.

The newcomers had diplomacy enough to do as directed without a lot of blustering and accusations. They drew back a little toward the waiting coach and looked out to sea.

Nothing happened. The newts' eyes must have been a little off or else the saltpeter the magicians were using wasn't quite up to snuff (and they failed to think of using snuff). The grey sands continued to stretch away without being disturbed by any unscheduled ebb or flow of the tide.

People were beginning to cast uneasy glances from side to side or accusing ones at the magicians when suddenly, just when hope was out, there was a roiling, in the waters and a certain heaving of the billows and then the surface of the sea was broken by the apparition of a vast slime-smearred black shape, like a near-disintegrated ship hulk, rolling side over side out of the water and up onto the beach. The iron man! rusted into a nearly shapeless elongated mass. A loud cheer went up

from the several dozen spectators.

King Scowleyow looked vastly pleased, and the magicians looked amazed. They hadn't really expected their hocuspocus to work, any more than a priest, invoking in perfect faith a god, expects to see the deity descend and nod and beck.

One person in particular looked, and that was Jrumm the witch. She looked smug. Her magic was still potent then! It was, it seemed, only her power over the Princess and her group that had been circumscribed. Elsewhere the sorceress' gifts were untainted. Everyone ran to the recovered image to look it over. It was too heavy to lift so even King Scowleyow if he were going to give it a dekko had to shift himself and approach it. When he had nicked up a strand of seaweed to detach it from a huge half-decayed button on the iron man's coat, he turned to his magicians again and comma/ended:

"Well done: Now cause him to appear like new, and stand upright."

The magicians gasped, but thought quickly. "Oh, Your Most Potent Majesty! we have not brought with us here to the seaside our Remedies for Renewal or Specifics for Standing upright. We fear..."

"Hmph!" said the King. "What do you fear?"

"That," said the wonder-workers' spokesman, "the great figure must be transported back to the capital where, in our workshops—"

"Enough!" roared the despot, desperately disappointed after all. "Too much! What use to me is this great stiff slab of corroded metal? I wanted a walking talking Iron Man to call my own:" Scowleyow looked as if he might have begun to blubber if his anger had not exceeded his grief.

William (Speedy) Rapidan had been casting an expert's eye over the wreck. Now he dared to approach. Groveling most winningly on both knees he besought the king:

"Oh, mighty Tyrant!" (in the original Greek sense) "if I may counsel you?: give commands that the figure be, as your wise-men suggest, transported to the workshops. I have some knowl-

edge—of tool and die—that may serve you here. This know-how I put at your disposal, to further your noble aims.”

Thus unctuously flattered, Scowleyow extended his protection to Speedy Rapidan and thenceforward kept him as Favorite at court. Could it be that the old jerk was mellowing in his age and thus unwittingly evading the fate he up to now had been deserving? He had condescended to accept a whole two creatures in a day to be his protégés.

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

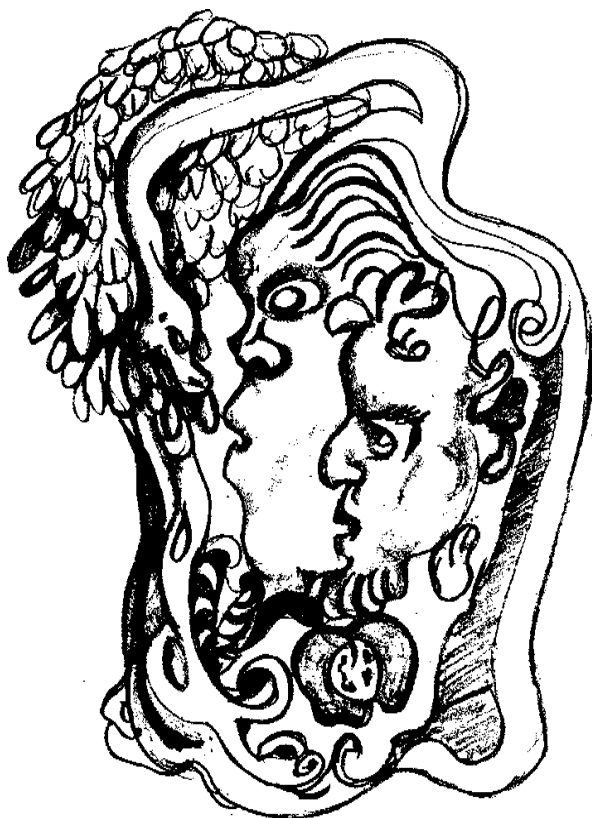
The magician sages were at least able to arrange that wide-gauge tracks be laid down from the capital to the coast and a couple of flat-bed cars and an engine brought out of mothballs to haul the cast-iron man to Scowlstead. Then Speedy R. went every day for several weeks to the Royal Factory and worked there with a willing staff of operatives bossed by the magicians, who wanted to prove that they could, in fact, do *something*^s.

From rusted black corruption the Iron Man slowly turned back into a viable flexibly-articulated figure of strong red iron and then, with chromium plating, into the same vast statue shining silver.

It/he was something to see! and King Scowleyow came to see him, attended by all his court.

Now things had not been standing still outside the workshops while all this was going on within. No, there had been showdowns galore between the ruler and his visitors, whom he half-grudgingly installed in the Guest Wing of the palace. The Princess, of course, stayed in her own Palace on the Park, and Bert the Bird often kept her company. But the Young Man and Fanciulla/Gureeda turned their backs on the farm-shed across

§ For a laborious description of just the processes involved, see the account of the construction of the giant Tilly-Willy in *Yellow Fog Over Oz*. Editor's note.



the fields and stayed with the King, in carefully separate rooms. So did Speedy and Sples and Omby Amby and the witch Jrumm.

The first face-off came the next day after the great Consummation on the Coast (as it went down in history). It began by with Jrumm's coming into the king's study bright in the morning (when he just might be expected to be in a good mood) and throwing her cards on the table. She invited the king to look them over. "You see?" she said. "All is discovered. These clever young people have forced me to reveal, contrary to the terms of your and my Non-Aggression Pact, that I am the rightful consort, though of the left hand, of Your Grace. Now there seems to be no reason any longer to keep up the fiction of the motherlessness of the good and beautiful heiress, the Princess.

"Impossible!" quoth the King. "I've gone way off you *went*

off you, ages ago. Anyway you know that I could not introduce as my Queen a former house-maid."

"Your Majesty could do anything," flattered Jrumm, though already again close to her threshold for top-blowing.

"In my eyes you would always stand as the pretty little slavey I'd seen dusting the bannisters and making the beds in the Palace of Magic."

So the witch *blew* her top: had a real orgy of calling royal Scowleyow both a coward and a caitiff, and more besides.

But luckily just then the Princess and Speedy walked in. The princess' parents suddenly simmered down. The king had no wish to appear in a disadvantageous light before his highly-reputed daughter nor yet his new favorite, the capable iron-works engineer. Jrumm for her part felt as much affection for her daughter as she could for anyone, which wasn't much. She felt obliged to give a calm cheerful greeting in return to that of the princess.

In fact the newcomers had not heard anything of the couple's quarrel. They took their mild speeches at face value. "Revered father," entreated the good and beautiful lady, trying to feel as warm to the kingly parent as she thought she ought to, "my dear William and I desire to be wed. But alas, as you know, there is an absolute obstacle: I am already married to another. Now I would ask of you most humbly: could you, would you declare a fiat of divorce affecting myself and the Young Man?"

A secret twinkle lurked behind the King's eye but he let nobody see it as he bent that eye (no easy feat) on the supplicant very gravely. "Hmm," he vouchsafed.

Jrumm saw her chance! The old goat, she thought, was going to refuse as usual, just to be contrary. It was his rule of life to be unpleasant at every opportunity afforded. She prepared herself with winged words that she would launch like arrows the moment the royal No had fallen.

But what? The regent was smiling! The gesture was getting to be sickeningly commonplace. He signed for the suppliants to take seats while he lectured them.

“I knew one day, my dear,” he addressed his daughter, “you would repent of your haste in marrying that upstart. I provided for it. I never liked the presuming swineherd. If I may not marry chambermaids, you neither should mate with a farmhand. Thus much do we owe to our working-class background,” said Scowleyow with amazing candor. “If we have climbed so high, let, us not, immediately begin to descend again.

“Did you not note,” he went on, “that at that fictive wedding ceremony the groom did not place the ring on your finger three times?” (Y.M. had deliberately not been instructed to do so.) “.Also the royal blessing was omitted. Surely you observed that lack? Ergo, the marriage is invalid. You have never been wed, my daughter!”

The Princess smiled brilliantly, despite having been tricked into living “in sin” for three years. But Jrumm railed inwardly and was more furious than ever. She’d been informed of those lapses at the nuptial ceremony and had been going to make delightful points with her child (she did after all desire such) by jumping in now and denouncing the King’s duplicity. Foiled again!

“And so,” Scowleyow was going on, “indeed! let a wedding be heralded. I shall give you. away once more—but this time for real—with all pomp.”

“Oh—er, sir,” dared Court Favorite Speedy to interject, “how is that going to work out? I’m working class myself...”

“Nonsense my boy,” encouraged the King. “You have a university degree. That at a stroke wipes away the disablement of humble origins. It is the individual’s own elective means to lift himself. Anyone may do it, and the product entitles him to stand with kings.

“As for your lack of royalty,” sententialized the tyrant further, “happily you come from a republic. Such having no division of populace into royal and non-royal, every man is as much a prince as every other. In such a society other qualities must be evidenced to place one among the elite. You have shown talent, and affability sufficient to cause a princess to love you: some-

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thing she never really did in relation to your rival. These qualities shall suffice for me. Let there be wedlock!"

'And then you'll be around when I want to send my Iron Man conquering,' thought Scowleyow, unregenerate.

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

While plans went forward for the Princess' (real) wedding and Speedy toiled at the foundry laboratory, others came for interviews with the King. There were Gureeda and her ex-farm-hand. They wanted *carte blanche* to go to Umbrella Island, wherever it might be. Maybe Scowleyow could tell them?

No, he couldn't inform them about that, but take *carte blanche* and welcome to it! "Why you want to marry that jerk I can't imagine," confided His Highness. "But please do! Then there would no longer be any danger of having the Young Man in *his* family.

Gureeda was hurt. Naturally she wanted her admirer to appear in a favorable light with everybody. Perhaps he was a bit plebeian, a trifle peevish, a *souçon* supercilious or social-climbing, but what of that? She had fallen for him for good the time he appeared as a gallant knight errant. She would never go back on that.

"You see, Your Grace," she said plaintively, "he isn't boastful or peremptory with *me*. He's sweet as he can be. Besides, he loves reading. That's a joy we'll always have for sharing. I can't wait to show him all the treasures on the library shelves at Umbrellia."

"Hmph," said Scowleyow, not much persuaded. "Should

think you'd rather go back to what I understand was your childhood boy friend, the likely Rapidan." (What was he trying to do? Break up another marriage for his daughter!?)

"Oh, Speedy's a dear boy," said the Umbrella princess with enthusiasm, "and I'll always be awfully fond of him. But there is that divergence of interests. He cares nothing, really, for books as literature, while I haven't a clue about mechanics. I think, for a lifetime's companionship, you have to have absolute compatibility, at least on the score of what you do for fun. Don't you?"

Scowleyow couldn't answer that, as he had never done anything for fun.

Then Omby Amby Battles craved an audience. The old soldier intrigued the king. He had been through the campaign of marriage to the woman Jrumm. He could relate plenty about how unpleasant that had been, thus reinforcing Scowleyow's own determination not to fall into the like trap. (It says something about the witch's forbearance that she even allowed this interview to take place.)

"But now, Your Magnanimity," finished Battles, "speaking of wives, I have a dear one at home and I would beseech you to allow—even to facilitate—my return to her."

"All in good time, my esteemed General," answered his majesty. "Surely you intend to be present at the wedding of our daughter and your good friend, Mr. Speedy."

"Oh, that, yes," Omby Amby reassured. "Therefore I pray you say: when is the royal day?"

"Just as soon as Rapidan is finished with the repairs to my Iron Man," promised Scowleyow. "Tomorrow, or next day. You can be sure I'm anxious for that fulfillment!"

It proved to be "next day" and then everybody who was anybody, and many who were not, trooped to Scowlgrowl Park to witness the unveiling.

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

Speedy had taken extra days over the reconstitution of the famous Cast-Iron Man because he wanted to introduce some finesses. He had been impressed, on hearing the story of the iron giants fate, at the dumbness of the original concept. Why dream up a juggernaut that could not be steered? It was a simple matter to string some wiring inside the great figure's hollow body and then with a hand-control panel be able to make it walk or stop, go straight forward or turn, to move fast or slowly, or even to pick up things in its great metal fists. If the man wasn't occupied flattening populations it might even be used to do the shopping.

A grandstand had been erected in the park and now everyone was gathered there. Even foreign dignitaries had been invited to witness this great day in latter Scowleyovian history. It was of course highly appropriate that the Monarch of Mo should come. After all, it was in order to crush him that the great construction had been created in the first place. The fact was that once characters and events had gone over into legend they were no longer bad or good but simply memorable. Thus it was that, in a later age, Western statesmen would attend the funeral of Emperor Hirohito or a Ronald Reagan emerge from retirement to play a featured role in The John Hinkley Story. It was

merely unfortunate that the Monarchess of Mo should inform her husband that she expected him for tea that afternoon and so he had to send his regrets. His Prime Minister sat in the front row at Scowlgrowl Park instead.

Then there were a dragon or two from the castle at Tweet and the Bumpy Man had come and Duchess Bredenbutta with a train of ladies had made the journey from West Credia. General Battles was particularly pleased to get visual confirmation that Her Grace had survived the flood on the Root Beer River a generation before. He sought and was granted permission to sit near the Duchess, who proved most kind and most condescending.

Bert the Bird had been given sanction to invite a flock of his old pals from the hills of southwestern Mo and their warbling and chirping provided a charming obbligato to the efforts of the Scowleyow Oompah Band. Some of Hræ stevrod's companions from the time of the Stable in the Forest had retained their transmogrified state as horses and they were brought to bear their comrade company. Those who had returned to the condition of mice came as mice.

The Grandmother of All Witches consented to make this one exception to her deep retirement. She was present in a seat of honor together with her husband. Sorceress Jrumm, resplendent in black and green velvet, hovered near them to be sure they had all they wanted. The two princesses with their fiancés were very much in evidence, although of course Speedy Rapidan only arrived when the Cast-Iron Man himself made his appearance. Meanwhile Saladin von Smith squired the beautiful and good heiress of Scowleyow.

Now, all in good time, here came the sweating engineer. Together with his team of artisans and the four court magicians (who wanted to get in on the credit), he loped in the wake of the great Iron Man along Iron Man Avenue. Cluck, plunk, went the vast iron feet, leaving rather ugly prints, boxcar-length, on the comparatively softer surface of the gold paving blocks.

Speedy manipulated the control panel and the giant docilely

turned in across the greensward and marched straight toward the assembled spectators. Some may have cowered a bit, recalling the fate of the previous population of Scowleyow, but Rapidan was a careful operative and his control wiring of the great figure reliable. The Man tamped to the ozyinium plinth that had been installed to receive him, stepped up, and took his stance on it. There he would stand forever (it said in the programme).

A great cheer went up, balloons were released, rattlers rattled, and penny whistles blown, while salvo after salvo of clapping stirred the welkin.

Just for a little joke, Speedy pressed a button and the giant Cast-Iron Man took a bow. Then it was all over but the shouting.

Or was it? Speedy, mopping his brow, stepped to the ceremonial chair of King Scowleyow. He knelt (he'd noticed what a favorable, mildening effect that had on His Highness) and, reciting a set speech, presented the control panel to the ruler. Most of the crowd from the grandstand came running to get a closer look.

The inventor was showing just which of the rather formidable array of push-buttons did what. It was all theoretical, of course. There was no prospect of anyone's ever again *using* the control. The great statue was simply to stand there forevermore, as a monument to Scowleyovian (and Long Island) ingenuity and know-how.

Still, there was great interest shown in just what the figure was capable of. Most of the buttons had been called into play just to walk the Man here to the park and all the others had been tested on trial runs. They had employed the great iron contraption to take up, in an easy afternoon's work, the tracks that, had taken many days to lay down between Scowlstead town and the seacoast. (Scowleyovians didn't want an ugly old railway permanently disfiguring the landscape.)

King Scowleyow was doing his best to memorize the buttons. Their functions were not inscribed on the panel. For him

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the exercise was not all as theoretical as for everyone else. With a *controllable* iron giant as one's slave, what glories might one not achieve!

Witch Jrumm, unquenchable in her self-confidence, was equally interested in the workings of what struck her as being very close in nature to the magic she herself (with temporary limitations) practised. She crowded close for a better look.

Scowleyow turned in irritation at being jostled. Then he saw who it was. Curses! That infuriating ex-mistress again.

Suddenly the King had a brain wave. In his hand was the instrument for putting paid to this interfering and presumptuous creature's activities. Scowleyow was not a complete nitwit; he had taken careful note of at least some of the workings of the control panel that ruled the Iron Man. It was the work of an instant for him to motivate the colossal figure to step from the plinth and virtually run toward the royal chair.

Scowleyovians had learned through experience; hence very few of them got flattened as the giant tramped rapidly forward. Nor did the group about their royal overlord suffer, even though they did *not* throw themselves out of the path. Rather, they had time to reason that where the person controlling the iron man was to be found must be the safest location of all. They stayed where they were.

Onward heaved the colossus. Now Scowleyow worked other buttons. The giant's vast arms rose. The huge metal fingers flexed and unflexed. And then an arm swooped and snatched up the horrified witch Jrumm. Her green and black skirts fluttered as she rose, yelling, high is the air.

The King roared with glee. Quickly he pressed other buttons. But he must have fumbled in his selection of directions, for suddenly the other immense hand shot down and gathered up himself! Glee turned to terror, his roar to a shriek, and the king's own hands flew out in desperation, dropping the control device.

All the world stared in horrified fascination as the great figure, scarcely having paused, pursued its juggernaut course,

tramping energetically onward, right toward the heart of downtown Scowlstead, crushing and shattering houses as it went, to the accompaniment of the screams of King Scowleyow and of his once-favored woman friend.

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

“Well!” said everybody and dawdled, marveling, long enough that the iron giant was already out of sight before anybody picked up the control panel. That was Speedy. Quickly he pressed the “Turn around and come back” button. Then they all settled down to wait patiently.

Alas, the able inventor and tool-and-die man had not been able to think of everything. When he installed the remote-control wiring in the statue he did not suppose that the controlling was going to be going on as much as a mile remote from the automaton. At the giant’s jogging pace it would be all of that by now. This dawned clearly on Speedy Rapidan after just five minutes.

“Quick, Bert!” he besought. “Fly after them! Tell them not to despair. And—if she can—urge the witch to exercise her arts to get the Iron Man at least stopped. Meanwhile we’ll do all possible from this end... Good fella! Away with you then!”

Bert the Bird and all his kind rose in a cloud and made off to the northwest. With a beseeching speech already forming on his lips Speedy turned to the Grandmother of All Witches. But she, elusive lady, when the cheering stopped and she supposed the show to be over, had taken her Old Man and quietly departed for home.

Speedy grabbed people from the crowd and entreated them to fan out, and fast!, in all directions and overtake the old couple and, if possible, bring them back. But then he remembered who he was, or rather, who he wasn't. He turned, red-faced, to his dear Pat (somehow he kept on thinking of her that way), who naturally never left his side. "Sweetheart!" That is, Your Grace : pardon me! I've been usurping your functions. Of course you're regent now. You must be giving the orders."

The Princess smiled indulgently. "I'm afraid you're wrong, my dear. The Land of Scowleyow conforms to Salic law. The ruler of this country must be male. I have nothing to say, as by right, in the running of the kingdom. My role is strictly ceremonial."

"But then!" Speedy was at a loss. Who now, in this emergency, *was* in charge around here?

"But don't forget," warned the princess further: "The royal tree has left us other royal fruit! The King my father *has* a royal heir." And now the Princess in her turn looked around to beckon to her side her brother Hræ stevrod.

In her turn she was frustrated. There was no one of the old crowd to be seen but three foreigners standing left over as the gay holiday crowd dispersed noisily, talking over the surprising events of the day. "Fanciulla!" cried the Princess; by that name she would always think of the other Princess, Gureeda. "Sples! Omby Amby!..."

The three moved quickly in answer to the summons. They seemed agitated, by even more than moved the Scowleyovian princess and her consort-to-be. "Isn't it thrilling!" exclaimed Fanciulla-Gureeda. My splendid Y.M.! He *is* the gallant knight I loved! — and love. Did you see?"

"See what?" cried the Princess and Speedy together. "Y.M. has galloped off on the noble warhorse to follow the giant! It's so like him." Gureeda was right to find, and proclaim, the excellences of her chosen one.

"It's true." Smith and Battles backed her up. "They said to tell you but didn't want to lose time in leavetaking."

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Speedy cased the situation in a twinkling. He turned again to his betrothed. "It's got to be you, my darling. There's no one else. Say what we're to do now."

The Princess was thoughtful. "They've all gone off toward the northwest, haven't they? I wonder whether — my Mother! — will be able to work her spells..."

Speedy broke in, seconded by Sples Smith. "Don't count on it! Drumm's is mostly manual magic, isn't it? I haven't seen her use a wand yet. But I did see how the iron man had hold of her with both her arms pinioned. If she can't use her hands...?"

"Northwest ... across the Shifting Sands. If nothing stops them, they'll come to Oz."

Pennies dropped all round the circle. "Of course! Ozma! She'll know what to do!"

"Yeah, but how are we going to let her know?"

"Don't forget!" It was the Princess of Scowleyow. "I've still got a wish or two left."

"Use it, girl!" commanded Speedy lovingly. "Use a wish for all you're worth!"

"You really think..." The Princess hesitated. But not for long. She had long since grown accustomed to believing that, whatever her husband-to-be Speedy advised was sensible and benevolent.

"All right then. Let's all join hands."

They did so. The good and beautiful Princess of Scowleyow took the hand of William (Speedy) Rapidan, her intended and beloved who gave his other hand to his dear companion of childhood days, the sprightly and bookish Princess Gureeda of Umbrella Island, who offered her remaining hand shyly to the dark and deep-pondering adventurer and one-time frogman Saladin von Smith, who grasped in firm grip the hand of the once briefly bold, now familiarly faint-hearted, Soldier with the Green Whiskers, who saw, at last within his grasp, the chance to return, in lasting peace and contentment, to his fond kind wife Tollydiggle in the Emerald City of Oz. He closed the circle with a hand to that of the expectant Princess. She wished.

E P I L O G U E

One of the great copper-studded, shagreen-covered, swing doors of the Council Chamber in the Palace of Magic opened noiselessly and two figures slipped out.

“Let them get on with it,” spoke Speedy low.

“Yes. We’ve done all we can do,” the Princess whispered back. She seemed content and under her breath she hummed a tune.

“What now?” said Speedy.

The Princess went so far as to articulate the lyric. She was trying to remember what it was she herself was humming. “...’what makes it seem so inviting?, ...”

Speedy recognized it before the singer did. “Have you got a wish left?”

“Mm-hmm,” breathed the young woman happily. “I think so.”

Rapidan looked at his date watch. After all, it had only been five weeks.

He kissed a cheek and said, “It’s still autumn in New York...”

Lund
17 August 1989—30 September 1990