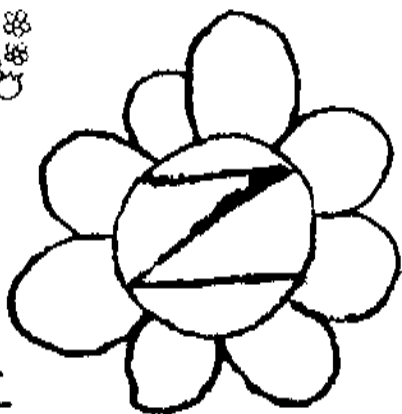
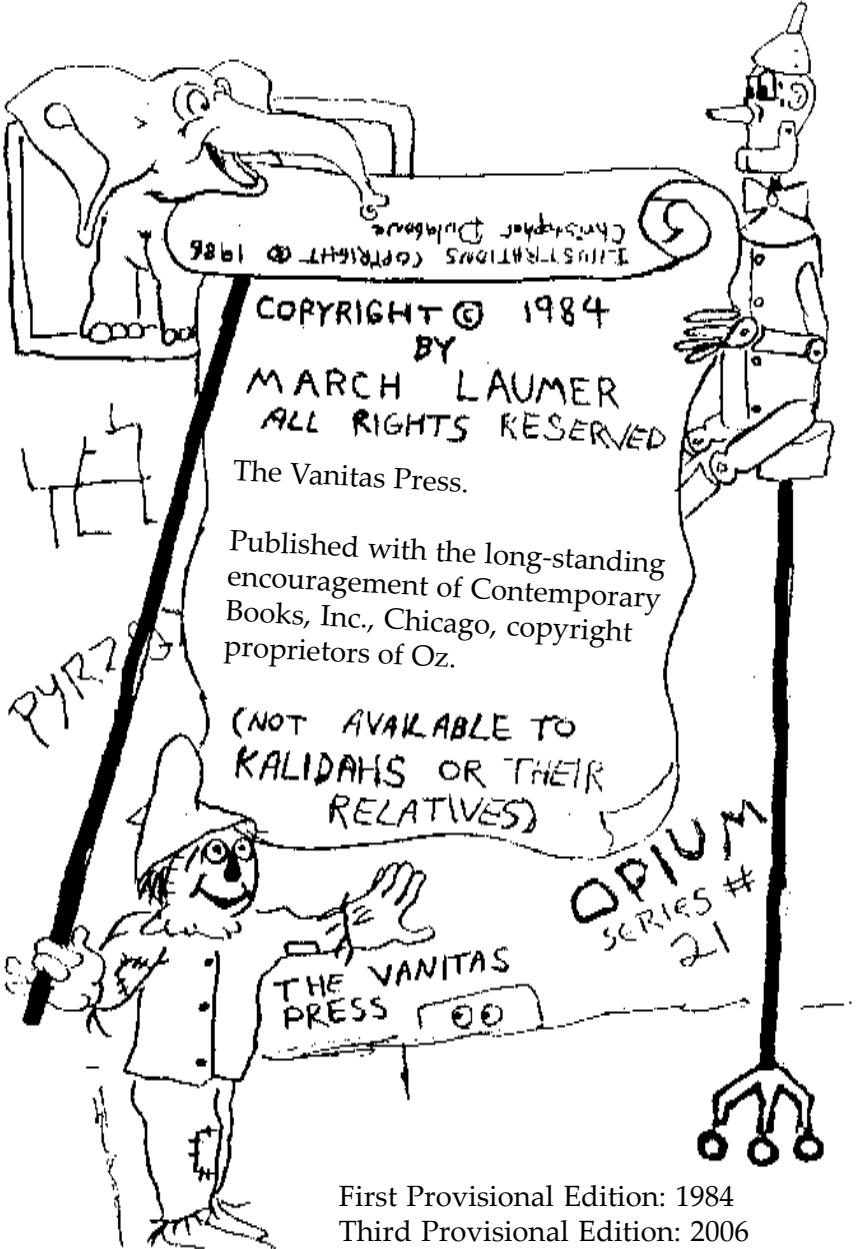


STORY BY
MARCH LAUMER
 ILLUSTRATIONS
 BY
CHRIS DULABONE



Uncle Henry and Aunt Em in Oz The Oz Book for 1911

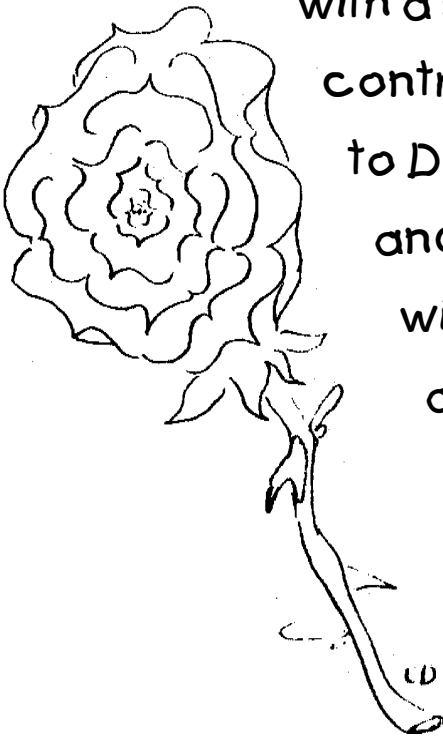


First Provisional Edition: 1984
Third Provisional Edition: 2006



This edition is dedicated with great gusto to Chris Dulabone...

with a bow, for his contribution, to David Johnstone and with cordial acknowledgements to others whose ideas were used in the tale.



C H A P T E R O N E

Aunt Em thought of herself as the right person. Indeed, her conviction of her rightness in every question and situation was such that, privately, she even thought of herself as the Right Person—as another might think of HIMself as, say, “the Tin Woodman”, with scarcely a proper proper name (nobody in forty books ever says, “Hello, Nick” or “Good day, Mr. Chopper”) or “the Cowardly Lion”, with no given name at all.

Aunt’s rightness was principally to be observed in her relations with her husband, Uncle Henry, who by definition was always wrong. Henry was amiable and resigned and had long since grown used to his own wrongness. Now, whenever Em spoke, Henry said, “You’re right, Em,” and the conversation ended and peace was preserved. On the side Henry frequently did things that Em would probably not have thought right but he took care to see that she did not find out about them. One thing he did was practise Indian Corn Magic out behind the barn.

In the present situation Em was loudly right and Henry was meekly wrong. Em said, “I wish I had my rag rug.”

“Your what?” said Henry, scarcely crediting. “The rag rug I made out of my wedding dress. You remember.”

This was an order and so of course Henry obeyed. But that

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

was when he made his mistake. He dared to say, "Gosh, Em—after all these years? You'll never see that again."

"Why not?" said Em, arms akimbo as she stood a window of the mock farmhouse erected in a far corner of the grounds of the Palace of Magic of Oz where the couple had lived for a number of years.

"Well, I mean," said Uncle hesitantly, aware that he had trod in it, "the rug blew away with the house an' all, didn't it?"

"Of course." Em did not elucidate further. When she knew she was right she could be provokingly elusive.

"Well, then—" But Henry wasn't dumb either. "Oh, I see!; you mean the house is right here in Oz—and probably the rug with it?" He experienced a wild surmise. "Gosh, Em, you don't intend—? "To go fetch it back? Well, now that you suggest it, Henry, what's to stop us?" Em suddenly glowed with an anticipation and an enthusiasm.

"Hmm, well, gosh, Em—" said Henry during several moments but could feel himself being wrong and was clever enough to end his sentence with "nothing, I guess."

"There, you see!" triumphed Em.

But Henry was not through having certain reservations. "How come," he said, "you suddenly thought of that, Em?"

"It's not so sudden," his wife replied tartly. "It's a whole week since you fell asleep and dropped your pipe on the floor where it set fire to your newspaper and scorched a big place on the parquet before we got it put out! Right away I wondered how I'd cover the spot. Then this morning I remembered what day it was..."

"Yes?" said the farmer when Em paused. "What day was it?"

"YOU wouldn't remember, naturally," sniffed the wife. "It's only March thirty-first—in other words one week before our anniversary."

"Oh, Em," murmured Henry, all too aware of how wrong he was verging on being.

"Yes," asserted Em. "And like always at this time of year I

got to thinking of the old days and remembered what had become of my wedding dress and suddenly I realized the rug would be the *perfect* thing—only it isn't here!"

"Nope, " admitted Henry. "But if I know you, it soon will be."

Aunt Em didn't let any grass grow under her feet. She waltzed right off to Princess Ozma and requested—or, rather, announced—an absence of ten days for herself and spouse from the group of courtiers who attended on the young Girl Ruler.

"Well, Auntie," said Ozma hesitantly—even she was not as sure of herself as Aunt Em—"if you're sure that's what you want to do..."

"Quite sure, Your Highness," stated Em. "It's Henry's idea. He thought it would be nice to re-create our wedding journey: to take me back to the house where I went to live as a young wife." This was a white lie. Henry had not mentioned any such idea.

He mentioned it now though—and in a way that Emily herself had not been going to mention it. "Yes, Ozma," he said diffidently (but Henry was not without humor, despite—or perhaps as a result—or cause!—of—the relationship he had grown into with his wife), "you see, it's going to be our twirtieth anniversary in a week's time. Em thought it would be kinda fun to see the old place again. We haven't, you know, in all the time we've lived in Oz. I guess it's about time."

"Maybe it is at that," agreed Queen Ozma. "Even in the perfect climate we enjoy in Oz the old house may have experienced some weathering—even have fallen a bit into disrepair. Although of course it's a National Shrine, no one's been in it in all these years. Maybe you'd like to take along a few tools, Uncle?, in case there are some small repairs to be made."

"Well, that's a good idea, Your Highness," acknowledged Henry. "I'll get my tool kit."

"Oh, never mind," reassured Ozma. "I'll get the Wizard to outfit you with the latest carpentry and household implements. Magic ones, to boot."

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

And then after that there wasn't much more to be said. Departures in Oz were often casual, even impromptu. It was decided that the Sawhorse and the Red Wagon were the ideal engine of locomotion for the jaunt, especially since the Wizard's tools needed to be transported—and Aunt Em had a few overnight things, as well, to be loaded in behind.

The elderly couple went to say goodbye to their niece Dorothy. She was playing croquet on the lawn with her chums Betsy Bobbin and Marye Griffiths (mostly called 'Trot'), and the girls all crowded round.

"Have fun, Uncle!" said Betsy gaily.

"I hope you'll find your rug all right, Mrs. Gale," said Marye, who was more formal and grave, though cordial withal.

There had been kisses all round and the travelers-to-be were turning away when Dorothy said, "Aren't you forgetting something, Aunt?"

"Oh, I don't think so, dear," said the aunt. "What might that be?"

Then Dorothy took from her pocket "The key! How did you think you'd get in without it?" asked the girl merrily. "I put it here when I closed and locked the house all those years ago. I've carried it ever since—just in case this moment should arrive."

"You clever child!" exclaimed her aunt and kissed the girl again for her thoughtfulness.

C H A P T E R T W O

"I wish Dorothy could have come with us," said Uncle Henry wistfully.

Aunt Em clenched her mouth and looked at her husband crossly. "Henry Gale, you're the limit!" she declared. "What about this being our wedding journey re-enacted?! Just the two of us alone together...?"

Henry was too kind-hearted to remind his wife that such a scheme was entirely her own idea. Just the same he missed his niece.

"Who's Dorothy?" said the farmer's wife in whose house the couple had passed the night and at whose table they were now breakfasting.

"There! you see?" was the remark that could be read in Emily Gale's eyes as she looked again at her husband in annoyance.

"There go all our plans for escaping incognito and going off into the wild blue yonder for a lark all on our own!" But all she said was, "Oh, that's our young niece. She had to stay behind in the Emerald City because she's due to attend a summit conference of all the crowned heads in Oz in a few days." Henry having blown their cover, Em went on to enjoy, anyway, a wee bit of boasting. "She's a princess, you see."

"Oh, dear me," said the woman, pausing suddenly with a

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

plate of bismarck buns in mid-air. Henry looked at them longingly from a distance. "That wouldn't be Princess Dorothy of Oz and Kansas, would it?"

"Why, yes, as a matter of fact," confessed Aunt now preparing to unbend and take pleasure in celebrity.

"And then *you* must be Mr. and Mrs. Gale!" cried The farmer's wife, vastly impressed. The strangers had given their names as simply Frank and Maud, address unknown, on requesting hospitality the night before. But the woman had a little name-dropping of her own to do. "Why, I know your niece well," she revealed with a simper. "She and her friends spent their last night here before their first-ever arrival in the capital!"

"Of course!" cried Aunt Em with a shock of recognition.

"Oh, wait!" cried her hostess and ran to fetch a big green book. She had put the plate of bismarcks down carelessly and Henry was not slow to avail himself of them. The woman leafed hastily and then presented for Aunt Em's inspection a drawing of a group about a low dining table: in fact it appeared to be the very table at which at this moment the visitors were taking their breakfast. Henry, who was no midget, had trouble getting his knees under the table.

"You see?" said the woman, who for the moment was doing all the talking for the family. Her husband and two children were present at the meal as well but merely listened politely and with interest. The woman placed a finger. "That's me!" she announced proudly. "And you recognize your niece... And there's the Lion! His head is absolutely vast, isn't it? I'm not sure the artist got that quite right."

Well, there was enough to talk about now, to be sure! The visitors, who after all were in no frightful hurry to move on, ended lingering for hours at the table of the kindly farm family. The big bismarck plate was quite empty when farmer himself put in a word. "I remember that evening very well indeed. And of course we've kept up as much as we could with the doings of little Dorothy Gale—as we knew her—ever since. But there's one thing I've puzzled over a lot never heard any explanation

of..." The man's voice trailed off as if he dared not say any more but, from the look of him, clearly was longing

Henry Gale encouraged his Ozian colleague. As farmers they had a lot in common. "Say on!" he urged. "Is it something we could clear up for you?"

"Yes!" declared the man. "Dorothy's name is Gale—and so is yours! But you're not her parents, are you?"

"Good gracious, no!" declared Aunt Em—and then with a sniff, "no matter how much people in some countries may think so. No. Dorothy's my sister's child."

"Oh?!" said both farmer and wife, and looked at each other more puzzled than ever. "But then—" they turned again to their guests—"the name... 'Gale'...?"

"Well, she's also," said Em, having nothing to conceal, "Henry's brother's child!"

"Why, how interesting!" exclaimed the farm-wife "—and how romantic! So sisters married brothers—" but here she broke off, for, astonishingly, Henry Gale had stood up, put down his napkin, and was saying in no uncertain terms to his wife, "We've taken up enough of these good people's time, Em. We must be going."

C H A P T E R T H R E E

It was some hours later before Emily Gale adverted to the touchy topic again. Even the right Aunt Em knew there were one or two subjects on which it was preferable not to exercise her rightness in regard to her husband. But after all, she *was* right. It wasn't *her* brother who—"Henry!" she said as they bowled along the yellow brick road; "I don't see why you had to break off our talk with those nice people. I had a *lot* more to say and they seemed so interested."

"Yep, I'll *bet* they'd have been interested if you'd gone on!" positively growled Henry Gale as he took his corn-cob from his mouth. He used it to point with: "What do you 'speck that is, Em?" And the sore subject was again gracefully stored in mothballs.

"Why, it's all red-glowing!" cried Em, agog. "It's almost like when you come over the rise and see the Ruby City. Henry!" she broke off. "We haven't taken a wrong turning, have we?"

"Sawks knows where he's going," calmed Uncle Henry. "Now think what it could be! We're doing Dorothy's original journey in reverse—"

"Of course!" shrieked his wife. "How silly of me! The deadly poppy field. Oh, Henry!" she interrupted herself again, "do let's stop! I—um, I'd like to grub up a few of the plants! If they glow

like that, think how they'd brighten up the old house when we get to giving it a going-over." "Are you crazy, Em?" asked Henry mildly but he drew on the reins as they got nearer. "Those things are poison. You know what they did to Dorothy and the Lion."

"Mm-hmh." Em nodded sagely. "But I also remember what they didn't do to the field-mice. If a person works quickly, there's no danger. Come on—and bring the spade!" Em jumped nimbly down from the wagon, seized a tin bucket in each hand, and ran toward the nearest outlying patch of the bright red flowers.

But the woman stopped and stood staring. It was a sight to see: a gently undulating meadow stretching out of sight up a distant rise and all one nearly undifferentiated carpet of scarlet. It was wind-still and the poppies' tissue-paper petals motionless. Presently, "I don't smell a thing," said Em to herself. "I don't reckon there's much danger of the scent overpowering me."

But still she did not kneel and begin to dig with the spade the farmer handed her. "I wonder what makes them glow that way, Henry," she said thoughtfully. "They're just flowers, after all."

"You're right, Em," admitted Henry. "They're not even magic ones, as far as I ever heard. That property of making creatures fall asleep is just a natural one for Oz poppies; anyway that's what I heard Professor Wogglebug say once."

"Shh!" said Em rudely. "Do you hear anything?"

"Why, no, Em. It's wind-still—so there's not even that to hear." But then Uncle Henry's hearing was not all it might once have been.

"I hear something," declared Em. "I know I can't be wrong. It's far away but it sounds—it sounds like somebody—*snoring!*"

"You must be hearing things, Em," posited Henry.

"Yes, I am," agreed his wife. "And I'm going to find out what they are! Henry, you stay here—and keep an eye on me. If you see me falter and fall dash in and drag me out—the shortest way." And so saying the intrepid wife lifted up her skirts and set her high buttoned shoe within the poppy field.

She hardly knew which way to begin to look but then it struck

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

her that the crimson glow was strongest out toward the middle of the field and she gravitated that way. When she had gone a dozen paces, trampling down with her boots and skirt a wide swath through the unprotesting flowers, it seemed to her that the sound of sleeping breathing was a little louder. She pressed on.

Henry Gale, at attention at the edge of the plantation, began to grow anxious. Suddenly just where the field's red reflex looked the brightest he saw his wife bend down—and then disappear completely! "Em!" he yelled in anguish.

The woman's head reappeared above the vermilion tide far away. "You, Henry!" she screamed. "You come right here! I need your help."

The farmer hesitated not a single moment but plunged at all speed into the field along the track his wife had left.

In a hundred seconds he had reached her side. At her feet he saw a young boy in a silver suit lying fast asleep.

C H A P T E R F O U R

"You're a bright lad," said Henry Gale in admiration.

The silver-suited boy was sitting propped against a wheel of the red wagon, stuffing the Gales' provisions into himself as if he hadn't eaten in twelve years—which, as it turned out, he hadn't. In between huge—though well-chewed—bites he was answering all Henry's questions with promptitude and intelligence.

"Why, I ought to be bright," admitted the boy freely. "My mother was the famous Maid of Light—you've heard of her?—" As a matter of fact they hadn't. "—and, though not a girl, I'm made of light too." Here he shifted his sandwich to another hand and snapped his fingers and a big silver spark shot out and zigzagged away into the sky. Presently a little bark of thunder was heard.

"Hot ding!" said Henry, delighted. "But now you go ahead and finish your lunch and then we sure would admire to hear your history complete." And while the boy cleaned out their picnic basket the old couple went for a walk.

Later, as all three sat abreast on the front seat of the wagon and Henry Gale urged on the Sawhorse briskly so as to reach somewhere nice by nightfall, the silver boy told his story.

"My father was a famous necromancer—maybe he still is!—

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

but I doubt it. Otherwise I can't account for his letting me stay there in that field for years and years without finding out and coming to rescue me.

Anyway, by his clever arts it was an easy thing for him to enchant the famous Maid of Light and make her fall in love with him—though as I remember Dad he was nothing much to look at—anyway, twice. I was the result of their union. I don't remember Mom very well. She went away when I was just a kid. But Dad and I got along fine and I was apprenticed to him in the magic trade when I was just out of rompers. He always said I was sure to turn out just as competent a wonder worker as he was—but while I was still a kid I mostly served as his messenger—”

“But how did you end up in the poppy field?” insisted Emily Gale. She was perhaps not the world's most patient listener.

“Let him tell it his way, Em,” urged Henry at the reins quietly.

“Well,” the boy acceded to Em's question, “that all began one stormy day when I had been sent to do errands for Dad's colleague, the Good Witch of the North. *She* sent me to keep tabs on *another* witch who was known to be up to no good—and it just happened that I was on the scene when the most fantastic thing happened...”

The boy knew how to keep his audience. Both farmer and farmer's wife were hanging on his words now.

“As the good witch's representative and errand boy I was talking to a bunch of the locals as we followed at a distance this awful old BAD witch who was gathering toadstools and deadly nightshade in an otherwise pretty green glade. It had rained all night and morning and that made it just right for the sort of wicked plants the witch was after to sprout up like anything. Thunder was still rolling but it seemed like the last of the storm. Still we all tagged along, fearing—well, hoping, really—that a last bolt of lightning might strike down on the wicked old woman out there in the middle of the glade and put an end to her machinations. If I must tell the truth—” said the boy coyly, cracking

his knuckles quite ominously loudly, "I had half a mind to help on the lightning a bit myself. But then as it turned out it wasn't necessary. For all of a sudden—out of a not-so-clear sky—a little wooden house—not much bigger than a hen-house—came whirling down and dropped with a splat right on top of the witch!!"

If he had hoped for an effect, the boy achieved it. The man to his left and the woman to his right let out, respectively, a deep groan and a loud scream. "The 'swift messenger'!" they yelled as one.

The boy looked from one to the other with the deepest attention and interest. "You know of the incident then?"

"Know of it!" shrieked Emma. "It's the cause of—just everything in the world—and the reason we are where we are at this very minute."

Now it was the silver boy's turn to be greatly intrigued and he listened devoutly while Henry and Em between them retailed most of the latter-day history of Oz. "How amazing," he said when they had finished. "All that! And to me it's as if only yesterday..."

Which for all practical purposes it was. When the Good Witch of the North received from her messenger boy the epoch-making news of the fall of the house upon her rival, the Witch of the East, she dispatched him instantly to bring the glad tidings to every other magic-worker, good and bad alike, in Oz. The Lad of Light (his professional title) traveled with the speed of light but, like other light lads, he sometimes played truant too. He'd already sped about to sixteen wizards, fairies, and petty sorceresses—including his own surprised and suddenly thoughtful father—to relay the news and the fourth day was a bit tired of the trick. He was ambling along—at a good deal less than the speed of light—on his way to number seventeen, farther-afield-residing Good Witch of the South, when he happened to pass over the great field of poppies.

Their color attracted him for a start: so red! ere everything else lay green or blue. And then what was this?: a great tawny

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

lion lying asleep near the edge of the field? Now nothing is so alluring to an adventuresome lad as a wild free-ranging beast of prey, especially one conveniently asleep and available for safe close-up inspection. The messenger landed lightly beside the great rumbling animal to have a look.

He walked around and admired him from every side. Come to think of it, he was feeling a bit sleepy himself. He sat down—at a judicious distance. Really he felt very much like *lying* down. And after all, he *had* been hard at it for four days running now. He might *just* take a wink.

But suddenly he was aware that two most peculiar-looking individuals were gliding toward him, apparently *sitting down*, and being moved by some invisible force across the field of flowers. He didn't feel in the mood for socializing just now. Perhaps after just a wee nap. Quickly the messenger turned and crawled away, further in among the strangely reeking poppies.

"And that was yesterday," said the revived messenger boy, wondering.

C H A P T E R F I V E

"No dice, hey?" said Uncle Henry.

"Nope."

"You want to try one more time?" the farmer proposed thoughtfully. "Maybe you just need to build up to it by practice."

"Well ... okay," said the Lad of Light doubtfully. He planted his feet wide, standing on the yellow-bricked picnic area, and clenched his fists—and then presently his eyes. But nothing happened.

"What if you tried running?—at the same time as you concentrate," suggested Henry.

"Well..." Again the boy was doubtful. "I never used to have to." But again he was ready to try. This time he stood in sprinter's stance as he clenched his fists and mind.

Suddenly he vanished—and in almost the same instant was heard shouting from far away where the road entered a forest.

Henry and Em gaped, then waved, but by the time ; they finished their wave the boy stood at their side again, not even panting—or only very slightly.

"Zippiochoggolak!" cried Aunt Em, exalted.

"My friends call me 'Zip'," the boy offered, pleased.

Uncle Henry nodded sympathetically. "I can understand

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

why," he said. And then with gathering comprehension and enthusiasm: "It's like I said: you need to build up your facility with practice." "No, Uncle," said Zip. ("Uncle' already! but the trio's mutual affection was growing apace.) "I think it's like this: I was only an apprentice, you know. I could travel at the speed of light, right—but only at a 'master's' behest. Same thing with returning: I could only home back in on 'master'. While running an errand—or returning from same—I could go as fast or as slow as I liked—or even stop. But I couldn't initiate any journey on my own. Of course my dad and the Good Witch have long since given up trying to send or receive me. But now you've taken over—a little bit—as my master. *You* sent me just now."

"Do tell," breathed Henry, awed.

"But just the same," Zip went on to puncture the loon: "I don't think we'd be any good as a team *yet*—trying to send me anywhere out of sight. I'll just have to tag along with you for the time being—if you don't mind."

"My dear Zip!" exclaimed Henry. Nor did his wife look displeased. And no more discussion was said on that score.

They had overnighted at Landowner Boq's and now it wasn't far at all on to the little house that'd flown from Kansas so long before. Em was quite thrilled at the prospect, but—funny!—she also felt just the slightest bit anxious—almost, well, she certainly wasn't going to use the word 'afraid'!

Then she happened to glance behind her. That explained it! Emily had always felt uneasy whenever a storm was brewing and now she saw that great dark clouds were thudding towards them out of the west. Storms were rarities in Oz and such a cloud-burst as this one promised to be would make *anybody* nervous. "Henry!" she exclaimed, "jog up the horse, will you? We better make tracks or we're going to get a drenching."

Now Henry looked also and felt an ominous twinge. That was exactly how the western sky had looked that awful day at home on the prairie. He needed no further urging to encourage the Sawhorse, with reins and voice, to switch to top speed. The forest to either side became a dark green blur and even

Zippiochoggolak, the Lad of Light, thought he might take some lessons from the agile wooden steed.

But after all it wasn't enough. The sky was black and the wind roaring all before it as the red wagon came to a stop—or tried to!—in front of a little grey battered shack at the edge of a glade. "Oh, this is terrible!" screamed Em as she attempted to grope in her reticule. "It's not a bit like I pictured our homecoming!"

"Anyway you have to admit this weather's appropriate," yelled Henry in reply—and had no idea how very just his remark was. "It's exactly like it was the last time we saw the place."

Now Em had found the key and she jumped out of the wagon just as the first bellying cloud was torn open and disemboweled. She was already soaked when she thrust the key in the lock, turned it—and the long-sealed door fell open. Henry and Zip were right behind her as she sprinted over the threshold. The poor old Sawhorse just had to stand outdoors and let it rain.

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

What a sight met their eyes! Well, actually it wasn't much of a sight. Dust lay ankle-deep over everything and obscured the scene to a soft even greyness. Where Em's rag rug might be could not even be seen.

"Pyew!" said the goodwife in disgust. "You say this place is a National Shrine? They might have stirred their stumps to tidy it up a bit once in a while."

Rolling thunder and dashing rain blurred the sound of what she said and her husband had to ask her to repeat. When she did he really had to protest: "Oh. Em, now you're being unfair. The Munchkins have done all they could. Notice how well-oiled they kept the keyhole. But they would never have gone against Dorothy's implied intentions and come into the house. You surely see that."

"If they had the faintest gumption," hmpfed Em unconvinced, "they'd have sent for the key ages ago. There was nothing in here Dorothy was all that sot on preserving."

Henry shrugged his shoulders, unconvinced in his turn. HE certainly would never have wanted to come into any place that looked, as he now realized, as dreary as this. Not even nostalgia and the recollection that his own hands had fitted together every board in these walls made him want to stay in the house a moment longer. There was an ugly chill in the air. But of course!: all three of them were half drenched. No wonder they were shivering.

"Come on, Em," he took control, "let's get busy. We've got our work cut out."

C H A P T E R S I X

It was six hours later and getting on for evening. The situation within the reinhabited Kansas farmhouse had not been able to get any worse and—since changes *had* taken place—it had consequently got better. Thank heavens! the storm had subsided and was now reduced to a steady-falling but untempestuous rain, as Aunt Emily Gale put her hands on her hips and looked around her.

In the first place a comforting big fire roared in the stove and all their damp clothes hung on lines around it. The first thing Henry had done had been to send Zippiochoggolak three times into the nearby woods at the speed of light to fetch back three armloads of fallen brushwood. Meanwhile Henry and Em hung up the clothes-line that the farm-wife had stored in the cupboard half a generation before.

It was all very well to have an arrangement for getting rid of wet garments—and Zip's by now were absolutely dripping—but what about dry ones? Glumly Henry looked through the window to see if he could spy the wagon and their traveling bags, whose contents were by now no doubt as sopping as the clothes they would all so have enjoyed taking off.

But what was this? At first there was no sign of horse or wagon. Henry crossed to the other window. Clever beast! The

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

Sawhorse had NOT just let it rain. He had turned his knot eyes about and quickly descried a lean-to (it turned out to be the Munchkin custodians' tool shed) with attached projecting roof, at the other side of the clearing. In a twinkling horse and wagon had preserved themselves at least as dry as the luckless people inside the cottage—and they were likely to remain so.

During a comparative lull in the storm Henry sent Zip—who anyway could get no wetter—to fetch in all their traveling gear—and a few of the Wizard's tools too, while he was at it. To the newcomers' infinite relief the clothes in Em's valise were scarcely damp at all and soon all were snug and warm, Zip in a tucked-up suit of Uncle's overalls.

The house had no modern conveniences—or even old-fashioned ones—but just at the moment there was no lack of a fresh-water supply. On the red-hot stove Em soon had a kettle of water boiling and then there was a comforting cup of tea for each.

There was no question of their going anywhere else *that* day and, though so dark, it was still only two o'clock in the afternoon. There was no mad rush. Little by little the three addressed themselves to coping with the dust. Now dusting—if the dust is ankle deep—is not a job you can do fast. You have to sweep with care and brush with caution—if you don't want the whole thing to rise up into the air and make the operation do-over-able an hour later.

Em supplied a broom, a dustpan, and old soft rags. The three worked steadily. Zip got a lesson in doing things slowly. Henry was presently heard to hum a tune. And at the bottom of the mess Emily found her rag rug. "Mission accomplished!" she announced wryly.

Now she looked about her and felt reasonably content. Oh, there was the odd reminder of dust that had been—on top of a window frame; behind a picture of "Hope" on the wall—but any reasonable housewife would be satisfied with the appearance the room now presented. Henry and Zip were quietly playing checkers at the table. And Em herself might—

Oh, there was one thing more. Just outside the door, under the dripping eaves, still stood the tin buckets with the goodwife's grubbed-up poppy plants. Poor things! they would *soon* be drowned. Em walked to the door, yanked it open, and lifted in her two pails. "I'm going to transfer these to pots," she announced.

"That's right, Em," said Henry abstractedly, considering his move.

Flower pots are never in short supply in a farmhouse and soon Em had six lined up before her on the cupboard counter. "But earth!" she exclaimed—more or less to herself really. With chin in hand and elbow propped on crossed arm, she considered. She was not about to interrupt the game and send either of the two menfolk out into the ever drearily descending rain again to scoop up soil for her pots.

"I have it!" she exclaimed. She stepped to the trap door in the middle of the floor and gave a heave. After all it came away easily; a decade and more of drying had made the wooden slab fit very loosely in its supporting frame. But the woman was nearly sorry she had taken this abrupt action without more careful forethought. For dust—horrid *black* dust—billowed into the room and interrupted the game at the table after all.

"Wow!" yipped Zip and "Whew!" exclaimed Henry, wrinkling his nose. "Shut that thing, Em!" he commanded without thinking. "That's terrible."

Startled, Em let the trap door fall. For once she didn't feel so terribly right. In fact, after a single involuntary inhalation of the swirling dust she felt far from all right. It was a defeat and she was well aware of it. She didn't care for Henry's tone and peremptoriness either. The incident rankled.

But meanwhile the poor poppies, a wither-prone plant at best, were drooping more than ever in the now hot air of the room. Em, with no other projects in hand, was perplexed. What to do? She seriously wanted a breath of fresh air now to calm a sudden queasiness. But drat the rain! And after all, the earth—dust—what-have-you—under the trap had looked to be the

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

finest powdered loam or peat-moss. What if she did just edge up the door careful as could be and scooped out a few potfuls?

She decided to attempt it.

And all went well. The fellows at their checkers were this time scarcely aware of what she did. With infinite caution Em wedged the wooden slab open and with her bare hands carefully scooped a dollop of the rich black powder into each flower pot. The soil smelt horrid—she had to admit that. But then rotting things did smell bad and rotting vegetable earth was just what you wanted to give a good start to plants. When the six pots were established, each with its burden of red and green, in a row on the window-sill, Em gave her hands and arms up to the elbow a good scrubbing. And that was that.

C H A P T E R S E V E N

Glinda, the Good Witch of the South (latterly always referred to as 'Sorceress' to spare delicate American sensibilities), was seated over her books in the study in her pink palace. It was early morning and a rosy sun peeped in at the east window. Glinda was to depart at ten-thirty to attend the Plenary Assembly of Royal Personages of Oz (or 'PARPO') at the Tin Woodman (Emperor Nicholas the First)'s palace in the Winkie country and she was looking forward to meeting again queen Ann Soforth, Kings Fumbo, Pompus, Kinda Jolly, etc. etc. and of course her close friends and colleagues Queen Ozma, Princess Dorothy, and also (ex-) King Scarecrow the Wise, sometime ruler of the Emerald City. First, however, she had paper work to do before absenting herself from her domains for a week.

One task, a daily one but one that must be done today with special attention, was to note all current entries in the Great Book of Records. If there were any events being registered there that might seem to bode ill she would want to take in hand preventive measures.

Oh, dear, there seemed to be rather a lot of things going on today: "Joe King and Queen Hyacinth hold a levee before departing for foreign parts," "King Pompus cannot find his Sunday-go-to-meeting crown," "The Gold Conference Room at

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

the Yellow Palace receives a thorough spring cleaning," It took her half an hour to read through them all. Just near the end of a not otherwise disturbing page of entries the sorceress came across this odd note: "Mrs. Emily Gale is not herself today."

"Curious," mused Glinda and rested her chin on her hand a moment. "I must remember to ask Dorothy about her aunt's health. I hope it's nothing serious."

But there was nothing in the great tissue-leaved book to cause the Good Witch a moment's real concern and she closed it with a little sigh of anticipation and prepared to go enjoy herself at the convocation.

At that same moment the same Mrs. Emily Gale was reading her husband Henry Gale the riot act. "Look at that!" she screamed and pointed to her right elbow. "Black! And where did that come from, I ask you! It's all your doing! If you hadn't been so wrapped up in your wretched checker game you could have gone outside and spaded me up some proper dirt. As it was, I had to use that nasty stuff under the trap door—and now I can't get it off!" The infuriated woman sat down on the bed again and wept for very frustration.

Henry was hurt, and more than hurt, alarmed, and more than alarmed, mystified. He had not been any more wrapped up in his checker game the evening before than that he had observed his wife giving her hands and arms a good scrubbing. Neither the woman herself nor her husband at a distance had at the time remarked anything more than her limbs' return to the state of clean whiteness normal to a farm-wife in refined retirement. Yet now Em's elbow was black, and she blamed it on him.

Not only the elbow was black. The woman's mood could not have been more sable. And what was this?: instead of reassuming the cheerful green and yellow print dress she had traveled in yesterday, Em was seen to open the wardrobe half of the old cupboard-chifferobe and take out a rusty old mourning gown she hadn't worn since Kansas.

"Gosh almighty! You're not going to put that on, are you, Em?" bleated the gaping farmer.

"Shut up! Mind your own business and go fix breakfast!" ordered the farmer's wife.

Well, that was just the beginning of a reign of terror that lasted all day. Henry and Zip were quiet as mice as between them they got breakfast. Just once Henry essayed a pleasantness. "I noticed," he said, ostensibly to Zippiochoggolak but clearly with his still scowling wife in mind, "a fine bismarck bush out by the back stoop with some nice ripe ones on it. I'll go gather some... if Aunt Em would like to toast them in the oven...?"

"You and your stupid bismarcks!" muttered the woman as she heated the poker red hot through the nest of rings. "Go stuff yourself on 'em! but don't expect me to aid and abet." And with that she applied the poker to her hair and began to frizz her fringe. The smell of scorched hair mingled off-puttingly with that of frying bacon.

Breakfast was a miserable affair. Em ate nothing. "I've felt sick ever since last night," she complained, consenting to swallow half a cup of ink-black coffee. "The only thing that appeals to me is—" and here she stopped suddenly and threw a glance sidelong at her husband, "a fat frog or so. Or failing that a toad."

Young Zippiochoggolak almost chucked up and he stared at the woman wildly.

Immediately after the washing-up Henry became decisive. "Let's get our things together, Em. I'd like to start right away."

"Where to?" said the wife suspiciously.

"Why, back to the Emerald City. We'll all feel better back in our own back yard. Besides, I want to get Ozma and the Wizard right onto helping young Zip here find his family."

"Are you daft?" said Em. "I didn't come all this way just to turn around and go back again. You seem to be forgetting: this is our honeymoon—recaptured." And here the woman chuckled maliciously.

Her amusement was short-lived. She had been looking grey around the gills before but her complexion now turned green almost suddenly and in a moment she had rushed outside.

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

When she came back in a little later she said, "That's a bit better. That coffee didn't agree with me... I don't think I'll drink anything else."

"But, Em," protested her husband, still solicitous, "you've got to have SOMETHING. You can't go all day—"

"Never mind," she shut him off. "I'll—go out in the woods later and find something." And with that rather threatening promise Henry had to be content. Though his wife seemed to have recovered from her attack, he observed that her complexion stayed green.

The next tribulation on that day of woe was the arrival of the Munchkins. When the Dorothy's House National Monument custodians arrived for work that morning they were amazed to find the Sawhorse and Red Wagon in residence under the tool-shed eaves. Not only that but the house itself, from whose chimney flowed a trail of smoke, was clearly occupied. Word spread fast and by nine-thirty a crowd of the modest little people were hanging about the grounds.

Em was the first to spot them. "Drat those busybodies!" the goodwife exclaimed as she glanced out the window. "If I've warned them once I've warned them a thousand times not to spy on me. Go chase 'em off, Henry!"

Her husband gaped. "What in the world do you mean, Em? You've never seen those people before in your life!"

The woman gave her husband a sudden startled—nay, frightened—look. Then she passed the back of her hand across her eyes and forehead and affected to be faint. "You're right," she said. "I don't know what came over me..." She paused and looked curiously through the window again. "But just the same, I don't want to see them."

Henry jerked his head silently at Zip. "I'll just go have a word with them, Em. You have a lie-down; it'll do you good."

Quietly the man and boy passed out into the brilliant though cool morning daylight that had succeeded the night of rain. Flashing drops sparkled on a million leaves. Henry approached the first blue-suited Munchkin in his path, shook hands, and

said a few courteous words. "My wife's not feeling well. The journey, you know—" and he nodded in the direction of the Red Wagon—"and the exertion and excitement, arriving yesterday in the middle of that downpour. I'm sure she'd love to receive you later though. Maybe tomorrow...?" Unconsciously the farmer had registered the conviction that they would not likely be leaving the neighborhood any time soon.

The Munchkins politely faded away. "Let's go for a walk, Zip," said the troubled old man, and the two fell into step.

"What's with Aunt, Uncle Henry?" said the Lad of Light in great wonderment. "She was always so nice before..."

"She *is* nice, Zip," insisted the man. "Emily is essentially a very decent woman. A bit sharp around the tongue sometimes but she would never knowingly do anything selfish or dishonorable. I can't think what's come over her."

"Is there anything we can do about it?"

"Not a thing I can think of! Leastways 'til we know what's the matter with her." The poor husband shook his head in bewilderment.

"Well," said Zippiochoggolak, "the thing to do is find out what's up. Now how can we do that..?" He too fell into a brown study as they walked a long a flower-fringed path in the forest.

"Of course," said Henry presently, "we could consult our friends in the Emerald City ... only they're not IN the Emerald City. They'll all have gone off to that PARPO conference at Winkiezia by now. And I don't think I want to drive the wagon clear across Oz—not 'til we see what we can do for her ourselves."

"Gosh, if I could only get back to Dad," said Zip wistfully. "He'd know what to do."

"You know where he lives—lived...?" Henry looked a question. "I mean—you haven't forgotten..."

"Course not," said Zip, wondering slightly if *Uncle* had forgotten—how *bright* he was. "We had a cottage on the border between Munchkinland and the country of the Gillikins. It was painted half blue, half purple. Too small, really, for all Dad's gear

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

but he hung onto it because of its associations with Mom, he always said. I could find it in a minute."

"Yes," Henry was speculative, "if it was only within hailing distance." Then, "What do you say we practise your message-running a little? just 'til Em's settled down a bit?"

Zip was all enthusiasm. Quickly they followed the path to where it joined the yellow brick road cutting broad and confidently through the blue forest. In the far distance they could see where the road left the woods again and passed on across vague tilled fields into the blue. "This'll do," said Uncle.

First they repeated their experiments from that time on their journey. They found that if Zip concentrated, while preparing as if to run in bodily person, he could flash as far as the edge of the forest and back in less than the shake of a lamb's tail. "Now let's try something else," proposed Henry. "While you get in position I'm going to do the same thing and concentrate too on your moving as far and as fast as you can. Ready?"

The experiment succeeded marvelously. The Lad of Light vanished to the far horizon; indeed, for Uncle Henry's aging eyesight he *was* out of sight.

"Okay!" said the farmer, as the boy stood once more, flushed and triumphant at his side. "Now we'll try another refinement. You scoot off to the limit of your present range—but when you get there, stay! Meanwhile I'll retreat out of sight, where you don't know where I am—and see if you can home in on me. When you get off, count slowly to one thousand—that'll give me time—then try to make your way back to me."

Thus it was carried out. Henry trotted along the path they had come by, himself counting to a thousand. He found he had regained the clearing in front of the monument house before his numbering was done. He waited expectantly... tensely... and then less tensely. Zip did not come.

The man's attention was claimed meanwhile by the appearance of the house. Great clouds of black smoke boiled out of the chimney—and from the open windows a hideous reek reached him even at that distance.

Then, almost forgotten in Uncle Henry's alarm, Zippiochoggolak came running out of the woods all breathless and joined him. "It didn't quite work!" he panted. "I only made it back to the spot where I'd last been able to see you. From there I had to hoof it on my own!"

"We'll try again another time," said the farmer abstractedly. "Look there! What do you make of that?"

There was nothing for it but to approach the house, undelightful as such a prospect was, and see what the badwife was doing. The door stood open—and green and brown fumes escaped thereby. There was a direct view in to where Emily Gale—or an unreasonable facsimile of her—stood at the stove stirring something in the biggest and most ancient pot—it was a cauldron, really—that the cottage afforded.

With virtual fear and trembling the two males approached. "Oh. Em," said Henry with a sickly effort to be light and gay, "I'm glad to see you're able to take something after all. Is that your lunch?"

"Hah!" The woman gave a loud harsh laugh and thrust under Henry's nose a great wooden spoon charged with a reeking black slime. "There's lunch! How would you like it: vinaigrette, or under glass?"

Uncle Henry could have sobbed with distress and alarm. This woman simply was not the Emily Gale he knew. From thinking she was merely out of sorts he now quickly began to believe she had gone—temporarily?—out of her mind.

He looked to Zippiochoggolak for support but the boy could only look back at him dolefully. They collapsed dispiritedly at the table and continued to observe what the scowling black-clad woman was up to.

Em herself seemed contented enough. At least: she seemed to be humming a little tune—or rather, wasn't it more like a droning incantation? And the scowl on her face was perhaps merely a look of concentration. For, as they watched, the woman lifted the heavy lid from the cauldron again, spooned up a ladleful of the odiferous boiling mass, and sniffed deeply—

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

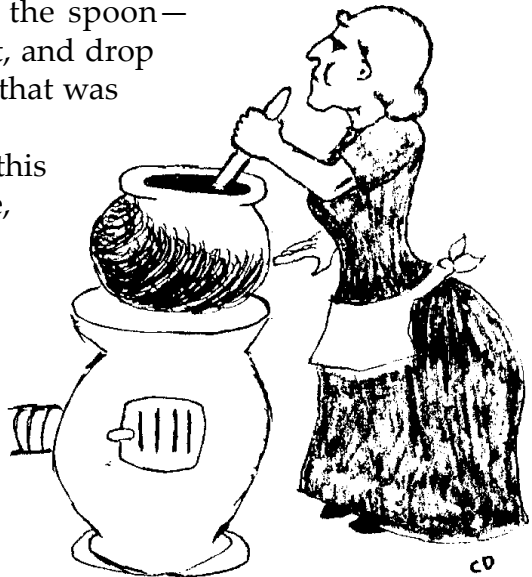
being careful not to let a drop fall upon her. It seemed that the brew had reached a proper potency. Now she bent and lifted a heap of feminine apparel the watchers saw had lain beside the stove—and dropped it into the vessel, where she stirred it in with a will.

Henry Gale gave a sigh of relief. So his wife had not totally taken leave of her senses! She did not intend that herself or others should *consume* the dreadful draught. She was merely dyeing her clothes!... though *why* she should want to spoil the pretty garments by rendering them all black, he could not for the time being determine.

Em stirred energetically as the cauldron bubbled and heaved. When twenty minutes of this activity had elapsed, "You there!" she barked, and turned again to her husband and her erstwhile young friend. "Go bring in the wash-tub from under the rain spout. I need it."

Henry was only too glad to be able to do any little service as a possible way of placating the evil spirit that seemed to have invaded his help mate. When he returned with the tub he found Zip on a chair taking down the clothes line per the woman's instructions. Now Em began to fork the garments—though with the spoon—one by one out of the pot, and drop them into the tub. When that was done...

"Now, you two: carry this outside, string up the line, and give the things a thorough rinsing in that little brook. I mustn't touch them 'til they've aired totally dry on the lines in the wind and sun... Oh, no..." The woman shuddered. "That would be fatal."



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

They got through the dreadful day somehow—but the morrow gave little promise of being any merrier. Upon Uncle Henry and young Zip devolved all responsibility for keeping normal household functions ticking over. The few emergency rations that remained from their travel supplies were exhausted and Henry mainly existed on ripe blue bismarcks from the luckily continually fruiting bush, while Zip discovered some twelve-year-old canned goods in the cupboard that had not gone off: a tribute to American food engineering. Em of course ate nothing (while the others were watching).

At bedtime Aunt Em commandeered Zip's single bed that had been Dorothy's and relegated the two menfolk to double up in the bigger bed. Gone was the easy friends-together casualness about dressing of the day before. Already earlier Em had ordered a curtain rigged round the solitary bed with the clothesline (once the dyed things were dry) and bedsheets from the all-containing cupboard. Behind its shelter she could—and did?—do all manner of strange things unseen.

Before dawn the next morning Henry whispered Zip awake. The boy crept into his silver suit and Uncle pulled on his overalls soundlessly and together they left the house. As they hurried through the mist to the caretakers' shed the Lad of Light

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

said, "What's up?"

"We've got to have help. I thought we'd ride to landowner Boq's and see if he can suggest anything."

"What if we tried to get to my dad's place?!" proposed Zip instead.

Henry stopped—and rubbed his chin. "That's an idea. But it's chancy. He could very well not be there—after all these years. And—" the farmer dismissed the idea—"it's too far."

"No, it isn't!" protested the boy. "It's no farther than Mr. Boq's—just in the other direction." This time Henry was persuaded. "It's true Boq might know little more than we ourselves, whereas a magic worker—that is: a *former* magic worker—I hope! ... since Ozma's prohibition—would likely be a lot more help."

But an extra shock was waiting for them under the tool-shed roof. They spoke politely to the patient Sawhorse—who, when not needed, could stand stock still in a trance for days—and were climbing to the driving seat when "That's queer!" said Henry and motioned with his head.

Zip followed his glance and saw that the rear of the wagon was totally empty. "You never moved the Wizard's tools, did you, Zip?" said the older man.

"I took in the broom and the squeegee and one or two things the first day," the boy reported. "But the see-saw and the augury auger and the clever cleaver and the rest were all still here when I happened to look yesterday."

"Was that before our trip to the woods?" enquired the farmer.

"Why, mmm, yes," admitted Zip.

"No wonder Em wanted a screen around her sleeping area. Those magic tools are all under her bed at this minute, sure as shootin'."

Hence it was with added desperation that the two quietly clucked to the Sawhorse and rolled off, fording the little brook, and headed northeast.

An hour's ride—and the glory of a fine spring morning in the Oz countryside could not fail to lighten their spirits more than a little—brought them to the blue-purple cottage Zip had

described—if “cottage” it could any longer be called...

“Wow!” said the Light Lad and for a space was speechless.

“What’s the matter?” said Henry after a moment. “Don’t you recognize the place?”

Zip stuttered: “W-well—sure! At least—I mean—there’s the front door just as it used to look, and I recognize that built-on wing at the left. Dad finally had to have extra room for his machinery—he went in rather for magical engineering. But what’s all that along to the right...!?”

He might well ask. Connected to the relatively modest original purple-and-blue semi-detached bungalow was, on the right, a great blue-and-purple-striped pavilion, like a great inflated tent with bulging sides, which quite dwarfed the older wing of the building. The annex had a vast door in its side and a pattern of windows; on the top rested a shingle roof, and there was even a brick chimney sticking up—but these furnishings had the odd appearance of having been stuck like decals on the outside of what was really a vast thick plastic suit encasing a monstrous swollen body. Most curious of all was a silo-like structure standing behind and rearing over the building; from it a jointed metal chute led down to the opening of the chimney.

Gradually Zippiochoggolak got over his bewilderment and the pair dismounted from the wagon and drew nearer to the strange building. As one they gravitated toward the annex that to Zip was such an unlooked-for and inexplicable addition to his father’s house. There was no question of attempting to open the enormous door that bulged so threateningly outward and which was taller in itself than the whole front of the original cottage. They marveled at the row of windows that mounted in a graceful arc from left to right and then, from the central peak of the façade, descended again to where at the far right of the building the last window was at normal human-eye level.

Toward that last window they made their way, hoping to get a glimpse inside. Instead, they got a serious shock.

The entire area of the square uncurtained window was blocked by a palest-rose-colored screen of some sort with an

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

attractive brown fringe that ran down its left border. Even as they looked, this fringe was drawn quickly aside to the right—and a vast eye, completely filling the window square, looked out.

The pair had only begun to gape when further wonders drew their attention. The entire building had begun to heave and tremble. And now muffled noises, like groans or cries, could be heard from somewhere out of sight.

The two new arrivals now gaped at each other, while the eye inside the house also did its share of gaping.

Suddenly Zippiochoggolak dropped Henry Gale's gaze and darted along the façade of the New Wing to the original front door of the cottage. Oz-fashion (Dorothy in early days wasn't to know that), the door was not locked. Zip yanked it open and was going to run in when he found his way blocked by an immense foot—or rather, two of them. Baffled, he started back.

Uncle Henry had meanwhile caught up with him and the two conferred. They had a pretty good inkling by now of the truth. But how were they to communicate with the enormous creature—human?—that lay imprisoned within the building?

They drew back a way from the house and studied how to get inside—assuming there was any room inside to get into, seeing how the whole edifice amounted really to no more than a vast protective covering, stretched and twisted to its uttermost limits, for an unbelievably grossly fat giant who lay inside.

"I have it!" cried Zip suddenly. "Uncle, the chimney! Undoubtedly that's simply a food-intake valve for whoever lies inside—"

"Of course!" struck in Henry. "And the chute is the way the food is directed—from the silo—down to the chimney opening."

"And!" jubilated the boy, "that whole arrangement is one of Dad's constructions—if I'm any judge of his professional 'signature'. But where can HE be?"

"There's one way, I reckon, to find out," surmised the farmer. "We've got to get up there to the chimney and have a word with

the mouth at the other end. Zip!" Uncle's mind was working fast. "Get ready! I'm going to 'send' you to the rooftop.,,"

Scarcely said when done. In a twinkling an alarmed-looking Lad of Light was standing on the wobbling roof and clinging with arms about the great metal chute that fitted closely over the chimney-top.

Worriedly he called down: "I can't budge it! I can't get to the chimney opening to talk down it. What'll we do? This pipe is articulated. I think it could be moved aside or up, but—" Here the boy gave a great heave and a groan. "—but I can't shift it... I need your help."

But how was Uncle Henry to get up to the roof? The collapsoladder the Wizard had thoughtfully loaded into the Red Wagon now reposed under Aunt Em's bed miles away.

"I've got an idea!" said the Lad of Light. In an instant he stood before the older man again. "Give me your hand!" he cried and, grabbing the same, "Concentrate!" he commanded without ceremony. There was a momentary mental struggle and then miraculously both males were standing on the trembling roof and struggling to preserve their footing.

"Hooray!" screamed Zip. "We've solved the problem! But more of that later. Let's see about twisting the spout aside so we can get at the chimney mouth."

Between them, man and boy, by dint of considerable effort, did at last succeed in bending upward the last three or four rings of the great aluminum-like articulated tube that depended in a big gentle loop from the silo side twenty yards away. As the rings moved aside and unblocked the chimney opening, the erratically repeated groaning noises reached their ears with magnified amplification. "Help!" was the first distinct word they were able to make out, and then: "Rescue, fair lords!—or else the day is lost."

The sighs and groans went on a while and then finally Uncle Henry was able to get a word in edgewise and slip it down the chimney. The word was "Hello!"

"Hello!" boomed a vast bass voice in reply—and then, some-

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

where below, a mind had sense enough to let the voice fall silent.

“Who are you?” was Uncle’s next sally.

A faint pause, a sound like a sob, and then, “I am Edward, Prince of Wates...”

C H A P T E R N I N E

The story, when the two Ozites (Uncle Henry by adoption) had got it strung together consecutively from the disjointed remarks of the imprisoned Prince delivered under the amazingly unfavorable circumstances of an interview down a chimney, was this:

“I was born eldest son to King Munchalot and Queen Chewy on the island of Gumm in the Nonestic Ocean. You know the place? It’s quite famous, actually. Several persons of Gummian descent have become celebrated out in the great world. I believe one family of Gumms did a song and dance act. And there were others. But no matter. Life on Gumm was easy and peaceful. Though not immortal like you Ozites we in Wates live a long time. My father was healthy and there was no likelihood of my succeeding to the throne for many years. When I was in my teens he sent me out to make the grand tour and stretch my mind.

“With a suitable retinue of attendants I sailed one August day from the port of Meziars. We traveled for many months among the other island kingdoms and republics of the great ocean. I learned much and broadened myself considerably—and I had never been a *puny* child. All seemed delightful—and my company of retainers enjoyed our adventures as much as I did myself. But then one day—or rather, night—our happiness

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

was at an end. A terrible storm struck—oh, very much worse than the one that passed over here the other day.

“Now we on Gumm—and particularly the folks in the Principality of Wates—tend to be a little well filled-out. We enjoy our food and there rarely seems to be any limit to how long we can go on enjoying it at a session. Aboard ship, deprived of the daily exercise we got at home, some of us had grown, to speak frankly, a little stout. That was our undoing.

“The good ship Inflatable was a worthy vessel but her cargo of souls had become with the passage of time unwieldy. When the tempest struck she could not cope with her excessive lading and, oh, alas, she foundered... I weep for my lost companions.

“As Prince I had been put into the only life jacket that was any longer big enough to fit. Thus I was carried away on the billows and drifted for many days, until at last I was cast up on a desert island.

“You can imagine my state. Grandiose as was my capacity as a trencherman, I had been able to consume nothing—except a little inadvertent sea water—for longer than I cared to remember. When the waves washed me up on the sands I had no strength left even to raise myself up. I lay comatose on the beach—and might eventually have starved to death right there, unconscious, but for a singular circumstance.

“I had come to rest face down. I suppose the sand upon which my face reposed began to interfere with my breathing. In my stupor I must have thrashed about—and some of the sand got into my mouth.

“Presently I came to my senses. What was this? I felt refreshed—almost fit again. And there was a a sweet taste in my mouth. That was never the result of the salt sea. What could it be? I wet a finger and touched it to the beach sand. It was granulated sugar! All unconscious my system had received a life-renewing infusion of carbohydrates!

“Another mouthful or two of sand and I felt up to almost anything. I threw off my life jacket and began to explore the island.

"It proved a veritable paradise—for someone with a sweet tooth like my own. I wandered for days in a sugarplum dream, discovering ever more marvels of culinary delight. From the pastrees of every known genus down to the basic rock candy fundament of the island, *everything* on it could be eaten—and all of it was sweet.

"Eventually I settled beside a lake of fruit soup, built myself a gingerbread cottage, and gave myself over to a rich and growing contentment.

There was nothing else to do but eat—nor, strangely, any competition in the fight for food. One might have expected at least bird life, but there was nothing. With the whole vast ocean about, full of savory snacks, I suppose the exclusively *sweet* substance of the island could not permanently attract a bird population. But at first, as far as I was concerned, there was but one sole drawback to life there: one felt always so dreadfully *sticky*.

"One day, however, as I sat beside a stagnant pond of charlotte russe among some mounds of coconut chocolate, too bored with eating even to stick a finger in the crumbly pool of pudding, it suddenly came to me that there was one thing worse than the stickiness. That was the loneliness.

"At first I tried to put the idea from me. I had found Paradise and was going to complain? But from a chance thought the thing grew to a conviction and all too soon to an obsession. I had to get away from the island! My parents, my people, must be frantic for word from the royal yacht, by now months unreported. Thus altruistic did I belatedly become. Besides, it was unworthy for a king-to-be to give himself over to mere gluttony. But what was I to do?

"I tried felling some sugar maples to build a raft. I even succeeded in lashing the timbers together with licorice straps. But when with great trepidation I launched the craft, and before I even had time to get aboard with my load of provisions, the whole thing dissolved before my eyes in the salt sea. Nor did a similar attempt with, for building materials, reeds from a candy-canebrake prove any more successful.

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

“Naturally I tried signaling to attract the attention of the rare ships that passed far out at sea, but there was no way to make a fire, and, even as vast as I had grown with constant feeding, I must have appeared to them as no more than a motionless speck on the beach.

“Then at last I had a bit of luck. The weather on the island was abnormally constant and fair. There never seemed to fall more than a gentle lemonade rain, which made the toffee plants and cookie bushes flourish extravagantly. Once or twice I did see what looked like snow falling on the ice-cream cone of the central mountain peak, but when I toiled up to investigate it proved to be merely powdered sugar.

“But one morning I woke to find that there must have been another violent storm somewhere out at sea. All manner of flotsam was washing up on the beach—and along in the afternoon a vast tree bole floated to the shore. It was of a size and redness never seen around the coasts of the Nonestic Ocean. Could it have drifted all the way from California? Anyway it was ideal for my purposes. If ever I was to make an attempt to get out from behind candy bars, now was the time.

“I hesitated only over night. The next morning early I tied the old life-jacket around my neck—the only part of my body it would any longer fit, pushed the great log into the sea again, and waded in after it.

“My ordeal was not long. It turned out that the island of my captivity lay at no great distance from the mainland coast. Early the next morning I flutter-kicked the log ashore in the land of Ev. “I must move on in my account!—though my adventures would fill a book. People were kind in Ev, especially when they found out who I was—though there were hurdles before the goal was achieved of proving my identity. The most urgent problem, of course, was presented by the fact that my incessant feeding on my island had made me as big as a house. I had long since burst out of my clothes. That was no worry, in the mild island climate, all the while I suffered from loneliness. But now I was surrounded by people, very curious ones as well—in more

ways than one—and my first ardent plea as I cowered in an altogether inadequate thicket was that they send for a circus tent for me to wear as a cocktail dress.

“Clothed, after a fashion, I traveled from court to court among those tiny kingdoms. I was aiming, indirectly and more or less, at getting home to Wates, but first there was the problem of my size to be solved. We like folks heavy, where I come from, but this was ridiculous. I could no longer even have entered my princely palace—at least, standing up. So now I sought the cure—but that was not so easy. Everybody said, ‘Just stop eating!’ but that was simply impossible. Cold turkey? Yes, thanks! and everything else there was in the fridge—until I had eaten my hosts’ larders to the shelf—at which point I would be shunted on, sometimes not even very politely, to the next royal court.

“Until I met the Red Jinn! He sized up the situation in a trice—and, at *my* dimensions, that was no light accomplishment. ‘You’ll need magic,’ he declared, ‘to deal with your case.’ By this date the only fully reliable magic workers to be found were across the great desert in Oz.

“It was the work of but moments for the Jinn to transport me, even at my size, across the strip of sandy wastes, to the northeast corner of Oz. From there I was to make my way further on my own. Jinnicky had given me precise directions about getting to the famous Emerald City, where I would find any number of licensed practitioners of magic arts.

“But my cares were not by any means near an end. Two problems arose with appalling rapidity: the first I noticed within minutes of my arrival: I was hungry! Now the Red Jinn had said that I would have no trouble in living off the land in Oz. Prepared-food plants flourished in all parts, he said. What he forgot to mention was that said plants, all the while I had been growing gigantic, had remained at their traditional size. Okay, so I found a thicket of beefsteak bushes right away—but each fruit was so awfully tiny in relation to my size!—and even when I had stripped the plantation I still felt ravenous. If I was going to have to stop and forage constantly I would never get to the

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

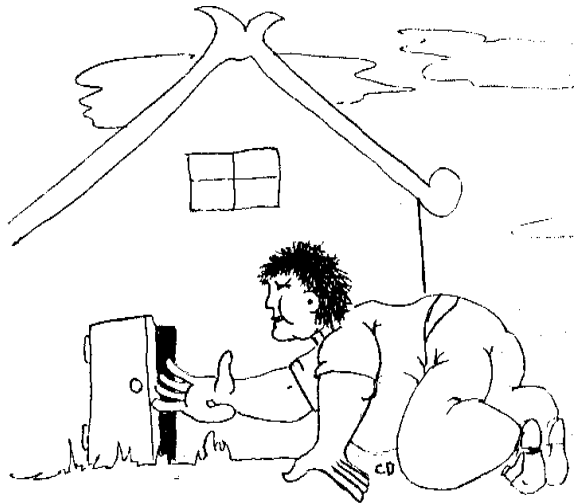
Emerald City.

. “The other problem was—still! but in other ways—my size. Not only did I find bearing my own huge weight exhausting—especially as time went on and I was using up more energy than I was able to replace—but I soon noticed that the yellow brick substance of the road itself was shattering under the unaccustomed stress. Heaven knows, also, how many thousands of tiny creatures were perishing in my way: beetles and worms and gnats, whom I had no possibility of avoiding treading upon.

“It soon became clear that I would never be able to make it to the capital. I enquired of dwellers in the area after the nearest known magic worker. They replied—rather shocked—that magic had *long* been outlawed in Oz but did confess at last that they knew of one who had *formerly* dealt in necromancy. I learned that his residence lay a few miles on, down a side lane, and I made my way there—that is, here.

“The wizard Wammuppirovocuck was most obliging! and flattered that I had made my way through such vicissitudes to seek him out. But it was quite true: since the royal decree forbidding dabbling in the occult sciences except by a certain few specified masters of the techniques, he had of course given up all use of magic.

“He told me a very sad tale. His young son had gone missing just around the time of the promulgation of the law prohibiting use of magic. Such a stickler was Wam for keeping within the law that, even in that emergency, he did not use his enchanter’s skills. In-



stead, he put a simple wayfarer's pack on his back and set off to walk the roads of Oz, just *looking*, as the veriest simple peasant might do, for his lost boy. He was gone for years—and never found the lad.

“Wam returned home sadly—and from then on devoted himself merely to experimental non-magical science: engineering, hydraulics, architecture. As a matter of fact, my arrival came as a boon to him. The problem of reducing my volume could be an intriguing professional challenge.

“I was already in bad shape and could have walked no further in any case. Sleeping out nights—no house and only the largest barns were big enough to contain me—had further drawn on my waning resources. My tent raiment was in tatters. And as always I was starving.

“Wammuppirovocuck took the project in hand. Within a week he had requisitioned materials and built the reinforced canvoplast structure you see about me here. In those days, of course, I could still get in by way of the door in the side. But soon I had to crouch. I couldn't stop eating! and Wam had not yet come up with any system, short of outright cruelly starving me, for making me cut down on my nutrient intake.

“Procuring my food supply was no great problem, though he had to employ a force of workers round the clock to bring in the shipments. But the fatal day was not long in dawning when I could no longer get out of the Royal Wing, as we call it. Wam hurriedly built on an addition and warned me to lie down before it was too late. He went into a huddle with his technicians and they ran up the fodder tank I've no doubt you've observed outside there.

“But not long after that poor Wammuppirovocuck lost his head. All his time and ingenuity were being absorbed in seeing to the requirements of my increasing bulk, when all the while a DEcrease in it was what was indicated. The day my feet broke through the retaining wall and filled up his own private living quarters the engineer panicked and fled.

“I had literally eaten him out of house and home.”