

C H A P T E R T E N

Here was double trouble. Or, in view of Prince Edward's size, one might well have been justified in calling it 'hundredfold trouble'.

Uncle Henry Gale and Zippiochoggolak made their way down from the roof-top and withdrew to confer at the Red Wagon in the shade of a walnut tree.

"What in tarnation do we do now, Zip?" Poor old Uncle was completely at a loss.

"Oh, that's easy," assured the boy with the confidence of youth. "Go look for my dad."

"That's what we *been* doin'," reminded the old man. "The question is how. The Prince can't give us any help; he's just added a problem. He hasn't got a clue where your father was heading for. Maybe Wummappi—er..."

"Oh, just say 'Wam'," assisted Wam's son. "Maybe Wam didn't know himself."

"I know," stated Zip.

"Well," said Uncle, amazed. "You're brighter than I even suspected! So where did he go?"

"To see Mom and tell her his troubles. He always did that."

"Zip, my dear fellow, you astonish me," said Uncle but then recollected that perhaps this wasn't all as marvelous as he at

first flush thought. After all, he and Zip had only been acquainted for

four days; he didn't know *all* about the Lad's history.

"Maybe you better tell me the whole story," suggested the older man. "I thought—anyway I got the impression—your mother had disappeared and no one knew where..."

"Oh, no," said Zip matter-of-factly, sitting again with his back against a wheel of the wagon and peeling the husks from some last year's wind fall walnuts. "We knew. We just didn't like to think about it. Dad and I rarely mentioned it, but Mom went right back where she came from: to the amber castle of the Lords of Light, right down in the lightest brightest tightest corner of Oz, the southernmost point of the land of the Winkies."

"But how...?"

"Did Dad and Mom ever get acquainted? Yes, that's what might seem puzzling, I know, Dad being from up here in the exact opposite end of the country. Well, you see, he had been a traveling magic salesman. With the particular branch of magic he'd specialized in: petronecromancy—"

"What in the world's that?" blurted the unsophisticated Henry.

"The study and practice of magic in combination with gem stones," informed Zip expertly. "I used to hear about it at home. Dad knew all about which stones had magic properties and which properties went with which—and where to find them—and where to sell them—"

"Sell'?" said Henry, a little shocked at the obscenity, which was no doubt inadvertent on the part of the young boy.

"Well, deliver them to people who were interested in having them—in return for room and board. That's how he lived: traveling around the country finding and—'delivering'—magic jewels—and incidentally building up a nice collection of stones for his own use.

"One day he called at the amber castle. Nobody came as he crossed the drawbridge, so he strolled on in with his pack on his back and in a little while he came to a sunny courtyard and

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

there he saw a vision.

"It was a beautiful maiden, all golden white, dressed in a sheath frock of ivory velour with pearl and nacre accessories, sitting at her spinning wheel. She was fletting sunbeams into thread and the bobbin was already fat and glowing away like mad. It was a splendid sight and naturally Dad fell in love with her right away. That was Lucinda, the Maid of Light."

"Your mother."

"Yes, but not right away. Mom was well used to people being bowled over by her brightness and beauty, so she was not about to fall in love instantly with a traveling salesman. She was no farmer's daughter, after all. So Dad had to get with his magic minerals and do a little hexing. He happened to have with him at the time a couple of emerald necklaces that were pretty good at granting most wishes.

"When they had showed him to a room in the servants' quarters he got busy. The necklaces were small affairs, the stones just chips, really, that Dad had picked up at a mine at Green Mountain—"

"Just lying about?" said Henry, surprised.

"Oh, yes. It was just slag. No use as building material. But of course it wasn't the stones' essential esmeraldry that Dad cared about. He was interested in their magic potential and that was pretty high, despite their size. He had got them strung at the first town he came to.

"By late afternoon Dad had completed his sorcery and he went to find Lucinda again. She was in her work-room now, busy weaving her sun thread into a noose of light... Omar Khayyam has a line about that commodity," mentioned the ever-surprising Lad of Light in an aside.

"The emeralds had made all the difference! Lucinda now looked at Wam with considerable interest and after all he was—*is*—a fascinating man, with his know-how, charisma, and charm—despite a gaunt hawk's head and practically no hair. Oh, had—*has*—some hair but he keeps it clipped close to the skull—and of course it's blue—with violet highlights—which

didn't perhaps appeal much to the very blond Lucinda, who preferred her own kind.

"Anyway, the upshot was that she agreed to steal away with him by moonlight. They left no forwarding address and Wam—Dad, that is—had been careful in his dealings with the Lords not to mention where he was from. To them he parted with a rather nice topaz-studded stomacher that had certain rudimentary properties for stopping time in its flight and even for making the earth revolve—for very short periods—in the opposite direction. They didn't realize until too late what they were parting with in exchange."

"Quite a romantic story," approved Uncle Henry, who was after all a bit of a romantic at heart. "Mmh," mused Zip. "And it went on so. For brief days they were happy, though so poor—"

"'Poor'?" said Henry, startled.

"Oh, they hadn't been able to pack even a ham sandwich in making their getaway, and they had no mounts, and their only clothes were the ones they stood up—or lay down—in. So they were not too well off for worldly belongings... Of course, they had plenty of jewelry.

"They made out on nuts and fruits they found growing along the way. To avoid pursuit they didn't give away their whereabouts or destination until they were well on toward the Emerald Country."

"Why didn't Wam wish himself home with the emeralds?" asked Henry logically.

"That was part of his psychological planning," explained Wam's son. "Dad thought if Lucinda was thrown enough alone with him while they took part in a romantic escapade it would make a less painful transition for her from the splendors of her brilliant existence at the amber castle to the very modest surroundings of his cottage, where she'd be having to do the dishes and mop the floor herself. As it worked out, maybe the transition wasn't long enough..."

"And yet, when he had problems he went back to her...?"

"Oh, they stayed friends! After all, Dad was as good to her

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

as he could be. Mom just got bluer and bluer in this blue-violet country—and when a golden girl is blue she’s green! So she went back to the Castle of Light.”

Henry felt like he’d been cheated a little of the end of the romantic story of the elopement. “But what happened on their wedding trip? They didn’t get caught?”

“Oh, no, Dad managed that all right. They hid out for a little at the Green Mountain—where Dad had picked up the emerald chips. The king there was one of Dad’s customers. They had a laugh about the emeralds. King Vergrodius got quite enamored of the little necklaces, especially when he heard about their wonder-working qualities. It was only when they were leaving that Wam confessed he’d picked them up practically in the king’s own back yard. He left them with the king to pay for their week’s keep. Seemed Vergrodius wanted them to impress some girl he was after.

“Anyway, they got back here at last. Dad gave up his wanderings right away and concentrated on making a name for himself with his magic hydraulics and engineering. A year later I was born.”

“A nice story,” said Uncle. “A dern shame it ended—sadly.”

“Yes,” agreed Zip. “I wonder if we can do anything about it...”

“We’ll add it to our list of projects,” said the old man with a wistful smile.

C H A P T E R

E L E V E N

“Shall we sleep on it?” asked Uncle Henry. “I guess we better,” agreed Zippiochoggolak.

The two had spent all afternoon discussing their predicament. They had arrived at the cottage/pavilion with one problem: how to get help in bringing Emily Gale back to her—if not senses—at any rate her former state of mind and body. Now they had a whole agenda of things they were under a greater or lesser obligation to accomplish: to bring help to the Prince of Wates, to reduce his vast bulk and get him returned to his native isle; to find Zip’s father, the Wizard Wam; and even, if any way possible, to bring Wam and Zip’s home situation to a happy solution.

“You see,” reminded Henry, summing up, “your father’s decamping means he’s already thrown in the sponge as far as assisting the prince goes. Wam’s become just another problem for us, rather than a means to a solution. I think we’d do better seeking out the Good Witch of the North than looking for Wam. You say she doesn’t live all that far away—”

“No: just through the forest and over a mountain. I could do a few seconds in the old days. But just the same...” What the boy could not—or didn’t like—to put into words was that he was so enjoying his adventures with the companionable old man,

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

Mr. Gale, that he scarcely cared for the idea of going to dump their challenges limply in the lap of a good-natured wonder-worker who would immediately solve everything by a shake of her witch's staff. After twelve years out of circulation a young fellow wanted to be back in the thick of things.

"Okay, we sleep on it," he repeated. And so that's what they did.

There was no room for them in the house. Prince Edward's knees filled the former bedrooms and his feet the laboratory. But by dint of some contortions and crawling Zip did manage to make his way under and over the royal limbs to pull a blanket off a wrecked bed and retreat with it through a window in the west wing. Under it he and Henry hunkered down for the night beneath the Red Wagon.

A blue moon arose and looked down amiably on the peaceful scene, whose silence was interrupted only occasionally by discontented groans, sighs, or snores from the captive prince.

Or was there one interruption more? You would have had to be fearfully keen-eared to hear it—or else extremely close to the source. As it happened, Zippiochoggolak's ear *was* very close to the source.

"Help!" screamed a teensy-weensy voice.

Nobody heard it. "Help!... help!..." the little voice squeaked—or croaked—on.

Then at last Zip did hear it. Or would it be more exact to say he felt it? For the noise was coming from something cold and damp inside the shell of his own ear, and it was the *feel* of the thing that had awakened the boy.

He pounded his hollow hand against his ear and shook out whatever it was.

Silence.

Zip figured it was something he'd dreamed. All he could hear now was Uncle's mild snuffles. He laid his head on the grass again and prepared to dream on.

"Help!" screamed a teensy-weensy voice.

Zip's eyes flew open and he listened intently.

"Help! ... help!" the little voice croaked.

"What is it?.. Where are you?" whispered Zip—and the words echoed cavernously in comparison with the tiny decibels of the call for help.

"I'm here!" cried the voice. "Under a blade of grass where your cheek was lying!" So much blue moonlight was there that a tiny observer could make out cheeks and blades of grass.

"That's no good," said Zip, after a search. "Here! I'm going to lay my hand where my face was resting. See if you can get on it."

From the cool damp spot he could still feel in his ear Zip knew that the infinitesimal speaker was corporeal. The boy lay on one elbow patiently and presently he was rewarded—and amused—by being able to make out dimly a minute frog about one and a half centimeters long which made its way in feeble hops to the middle of his palm. There it stopped and bleated, "Help."

"Everybody needs help today," commented Zip wryly; "me too. But who are you? And what kind of help do you want?"

"I," croaked the tiny frog, "am the King of the Green Mountain."

If he expected to make an impression with this announcement, the frog succeeded. "Wow!" yipped Zip—and no longer in a whisper. "What a coincidence! I was talking about you only today—at least: I was telling about the King of the Green Mountain... But how...?!"

"Did I get in this shape?" asked the frog. "Well may you ask. This is the fruit of rashness. Or if one cared to analyze further, it could be said that this was the reward of true love." But at this point the little creature broke down in croaking sobs.

"Uncle! Uncle!" spoke Zip urgently and jerked the sleeve of the sleeping man next to him.

"Hey! What? Em..?" muttered the startled Henry—and then come to himself and realized where he was. "Zip? What's going on?"

"Listen to this!" said the excited boy. "I've just met the King

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

of the Green Mountain!" Henry gazed round but saw nothing in the blue moonshine. "You didn't just dream you met him, boy?" speculated the old man. "I remember you mentioned somebody by that name lately."

"No, no, Uncle! Look down here! in my hand. There's a little tiny froggy. That's the king." Henry obediently looked—but without his glasses and an ear trumpet he could neither see nor hear anything out of the ordinary.

Zip was obliged to relay word to him. He explained the case, and then man and boy leaned on their elbows under the blanket under the wagon and heard—gradually—a heart-rending tale.

"I was Vergrodius the Fourth, King of the Green Mountain, scion of an ancient and honored line—if *not* perhaps the most handsome of families," began the frog between croaks and sobs. "Indeed, my people were not of any great size either, and at my birth my family were distressed that I seemed to be going to be the smallest of the entire race. Therefore they doubled their efforts in providing me with the finest and most genteel of up-bringsings. I must after all be a worthy successor to the long line of Green Mountain kings.

"One great and beautiful distinction we did possess. Our mountain, called Gruneberg, was—and I dare say still is—the most majestic mountain in all Oz. Though it is only one great spreading cone its total area from the foot-slopes upward is greater than that of many other kingdoms in Oz. We had every right to be proud and content.

"Until one day...!"

"I had just attained my majority when my grandfather, old King Vergrodius the Third, died, and I was to succeed. I was a lusty youth—though so small of stature and—some said—ill-favored. But the great eyes and receding chin were caste-marks of our dynasty; no more than the Guelph pop-eyes or the Habsburg jaw, among royal characteristics out in the great world, did we Grunebergers want to lose our distinguishing traits. And I was popular. At least, my hunting and drinking companions

affirmed there was no one they would rather go jousting or wenching with.

“Until one day...”

The green king realized by now he had his audience. Zip and Henry looked and listened raptly and the frog gradually relaxed in the place where Zip had positioned him; full in a blue moonbeam on horizontal spoke of the wagon wheel; he also ceased to hiccup.

“One day, hunting in the forest of Vervalde, and happening to become separated from my companions, I found myself beside a green forest mere—and near the opposite shore, bathing, I espied the loveliest creature in the world. It was a wood nymph, as I afterward learned. When I startled her, she ran from the water, shedding emerald drops, and hid herself in the greenery. Of course I followed her, but never a trace of her did I find. Only, an old woman in a forester’s hut not far off told me it must be Lorna, the local tree sprite. She was well known in the neighborhood.

“After that, every day for months I was in the wood and sometimes I glimpsed her but more often not. Then at last one winter day I entrapped her. I came to the pond to find it—a great rarity in Oz—frozen over.

“Wood nymphs like to be very dainty about their persons always. Lorna wanted her daily bath. But the poor thing! What was she to do? There she stood at the ice’s edge with knees drawn together one nether limb chafing the other, and seemed wholly perplexed, as cautiously I drew near.

“Well! when I offered her a hot tub at the palace she succumbed at once. I could see she wasn’t really so wild about *me*. But don’t you see?: I could do things for her and I wanted so much to be her true cavalier.

“So things went on for some time. I would see her occasionally and often there would be some little way in which I could be of service to her. People even began to say that the relationship, though distinctly irregular, was having a beneficial effect on me: for the first time I was thinking generously of someone

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

other than myself, and such an advance in maturity in a ruler was all to the good.

“But, marriage: that was what I wanted. It was partly dynastic, I’ll admit: I thought of what beautiful children Lorna and I might have! But when I proposed it she was scornful. I had to admit my beloved sometimes showed unlovable traits of personality. But she was so pretty!

“Then one day my old friend and sometime drinking companion, the magic-peddler Wammuppirovocuck, turned up at the palace. He had his own girl friend in tow and how I did envy them: so happy in their elopement—though they hadn’t a bean. They did have a satchelful of jewels with them though and I was struck by a pair of fine emerald necklaces. I thought how splendid they would look on the shoulders of my beloved—or perhaps wound round her arms. Their brilliant gleam would just set off her fine-spun-green hair. So I had them of the merchant.

“I had need of my bodyguard of faithful yeomen now. They had orders to hunt out the forest nymph it at any cost. After a week came word that they had her surrounded at the vast old hollow oak which I now learned, at last, was her usual residence. I hurried to the scene, dismissed the men, and with trembling heart knocked at the door to her tree.

“After a moment an upper window flew open and Lorna leaned out. ‘Oh, it’s you, King,’ said she. ‘Half a tick. I’ll be right down.’

“Soon the door was opened wide and we were both inside.

“‘So this is where you live?’ I said. ‘Very tastefully appointed,’ I commented, noting the needlepoint pictures on the staircase wall and the antimacassars in the best sitting room. Lorna shoved some rather at-home-looking squirrels off the settee and asked me to sit down.

“Soon my business had been done. I showed her the magic emerald-chip necklaces: so dainty and fine in their olive-wood case, and Lorna was thrilled. ‘Are they for me?’ she cried, and I explained that they were—with a proviso. They were in fact my

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

bride-gift to her. If she accepted them, it was understood that we were betrothed. Do you wonder my heart beat high?

"But at this the nymph looked grave. She *still* held back. Then I saw a calculating look come in her eyes.

'Tell me,' she said, 'how do they work?'

"At once I handed her the instruction booklet which explained just how one should go about accomplishing whatever wish one wished, by the use of the emeralds.

"Done!" cried Lorna, now in fine fettle. 'I'll marry you.' How my emotions thrilled. 'And now may I have the jewels?'

"With a courtly bow and a tender kiss to her outstretched hand I delivered the case into the keeping of my adored one.

"Quick as a wink she turned me into an infinitesimally tiny green tree frog."



C H A P T E R T W E L V E

It was a fine morning and the Red Wagon was rattling along at a furious clip, yet no fierouser than that Henry Gale and Zippiochoggolak could discuss their plans. They were on their very fast way to the Land of Light.

'Sleeping on it' had been no easy thing, since they had sat up most of the night listening to the Green King's adventures. But after all by the time dawn came they had reached the decision they had hoped to reach by that morning. They were on their way to try by whatever means to find the necromancer Wammuppirovocuck.

King Vergrodius' story had been most tragic. As he vanished (so he related) to an almost invisible green point on Lorna's cretonne-covered settee he had seen the wood nymph stuff the emerald necklaces in her pocket with a cry of triumph. Then without a backward glance she left the apartment.

The frog king would have liked to do the same. In the first moments of shock he was only intent on getting away to a safe corner where he would not so likely be sat on and could think over his sudden awful predicament. He had at least, he found, the frog's traditional ability to make monstrous great leaps. In only four jumps he had arrived at the edge of the seat cushion. Then a mighty spring and he landed on the grey turkey-carpet.

By mid-afternoon he had reached a corner of the room and there he lay low and went into delayed shock.

It must have been the next morning that he came to his senses to hear great screams rending the air in the otherwise silent tree house. He recognized Lorna's voice! but had no idea what occasioned her cries of apparent grief and outrage. Later he heard a door slam and then all was once more stillness.

By nightfall the transformed king had made his plans. Already he was growing in wisdom. After weeping all the first night over his pitiful comedown he was now resigned to it—or at least resigned to the fact that he would remain down-come unless he undertook to do something about it. But what to do? Make his slow and tortuous way back to his palace where no one would ever by any chance notice him or hear his laments—nor, as far as he knew, had any clue about undoing an enchantment?

The only possible—and hopelessly distant—chance, saw the king, lay in taking the road to the house of the necromancer who was ultimately responsible for his present sorry state. Vergrodius had had Wam's business card in his pocket at the moment of his enchantment and he remembered the address perfectly: Number 13 Legerdemain Lane, near the gallows tree on Blastead Heath at the Munchkin-Gillikin border.

He started out. In just two days he had made his way downstairs and out the door of Lorna's house-tree. At least in his present infinitely small shape there were certain advantages. No barrier was so secure but what he could pass it; the fact that Lorna had slammed the front door did not prevent the king's strolling underneath it and so out to freedom. Furthermore, nourishment was no problem: one drop of rain water did him for drink for a day, and the head of a wood-louse or a few gnats' wings would feed him to repletion. That he might be eaten himself seemed not to occur to him. He was after all a King.

But how long would he remain so? Having no word from the lost regent for many weeks, months, at last years, his subjects would long since have chosen another ruler. Vergrodius

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

had named no heir. Who expected a twenty-year-old king to be vacating his chair any time soon? He supposed it was his elderly cousin Zhelenny who would take over.

Soon thoughts of his lost mountain kingdom grew attenuated in the mind of the king. That mind was more filled for a long time with bitter reflections upon his lost mistress. As he made his way by infinitely slow stages through the forest he often saw Lorna roving about in distress, her garments in disarray and prickly burrs caught in her palest-green tresses. She seemed to be looking for something but Vergrodius was never able to make out what it was. What should she need to seek in the barren woods? If there was anything she wanted she had emerald necklaces that would grant her every wish.

By the end of that year he had at last reached the edge of the forest. Afterwards, for many months, he traveled along the shores of Lake Quad, a rather large pond that abutted on the grounds of the Palace of Oz. He did not enter the pond and paddle directly across. That was because he was a tree frog and no expert swimmer. He felt more secure on land, where, after all, he had lived his whole life.

He had lived his whole life in a palace too, so he felt quite at home during the weeks it took him to journey past the great green mansion of the ruler of Oz. Sometimes in those days, early in the morning, he would notice a funny little (by human standards; vast, to Vergrodius) bald-headed man slip out of a side door and go for a constitutional up and down the paths of the park.

But after a time the palace turrets disappeared in the distance.

Many years later Vergrodius happened to be in a blue glade in a Munchkin forest when a curious scene was enacted before his eyes. It is not generally known that there were in fact five participants in a tableau that later became most celebrated in Oz annals.

The frog king had arrived at nightfall at a lump of corroded metal that lay in his path. By a couple of extraordinary leaps he

was able to get upon the crest of what to him was a sizeable tin hill. He remarked another massive flange of metal that seemed partly to encase the surface he stood on, and he hopped in under the ledge of it and there spent the night, disturbed only by occasional hollow reverberations that came from somewhere on high. He put these down to summer thunder. Bright and early the next morning, as the sun gleamed on certain unstained portions of his metal hostelry, Vergrodius was making his toilet, prior to departing, when he was surprised to see a young girl appear at the edge of the clearing. She was staring at the great metal construction that ran up into the sky from the tin pediment which had been Vergrodius' hotel. In a moment a most peculiar male figure joined the girl, together with a black dog, and they all stared at the great statue which seemed to represent (much foreshortened, to the frog king's eyes) a man.

"Did you groan?" asked the young girl.

"Yes," answered the tin man; "I did. I've been groaning for more than a year, and no one has ever heard me before or come to help me."

"What can I do for you?" she inquired, softly, for she seemed moved by the sad voice in which the man spoke.

"Get an oil-can and oil my joints," he answered. "They are rusted so badly that I cannot move them at all; if I am well oiled I shall soon be all right again. You will find an oil-can on a shelf in my cottage."

The girl at once ran to the cottage and found the oil-can, and then she returned and asked, anxiously, "Where are your joints?"

"Oil my neck, first," replied the Tin Woodman. So she oiled it, and as it was quite badly rusted the strange-looking straw man took hold of the tin head and moved it gently from side to side until it worked freely, and then the man could turn it himself.

"Now oil the joints in my arms," he said. And the girl oiled them and the straw man bent them carefully until they were quite free from rust and as good as new.

The Tin Woodman gave a sigh of satisfaction and lowered

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

his axe, which he leaned against a tree. "This is a great comfort," he said. "I have been holding that axe in the air ever since I rusted, and I'm glad to be able to put it down at last. Now, if you will oil the joints of my legs, I shall be all right once more."

So they oiled his legs until he could move them freely; and he thanked them again and again for his release, for he seemed a very polite creature, and very grateful.

"I might have stood there always if you had not come along," he said; "so you have certainly saved my life. How did you happen to be here?"

"We are on our way to the Emerald City, to see the great Oz," the girl answered, "and we stopped at your cottage to pass the night."

"Why do you wish to see Oz?" he asked.

"I want him to send me back to Kansas; and the Scarecrow wants him to put a few brains into his head," she replied.

The Tin Woodman appeared to think deeply for a moment. Then he said: "Do you suppose Oz could give me a heart?"

"Why, I guess so," the girl answered; "it would be as easy as to give the Scarecrow brains." "True," the Tin Woodman returned. "So, if you will allow me to join your party, I will also go to the Emerald City and ask Oz to help me."

"Come along," said the Scarecrow, heartily; and the girl added that she would be pleased to have his company.

At this King Vergridius gave a mighty leap and managed, in one bound, to clear the great metal foot to which he had until now been clinging.

Great heavens! to be carried all the way back to the Emerald City which he with such toil and care had left many years before? That would be the most awful disaster.

So, gasping from the exertion and at the fright he had got, the frog watched the Tin Woodman shoulder his axe and the quartet pass away into the forest.

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

As the months passed Vergrodius thought often on the curious scene he had witnessed, nay, almost taken a part in. Sometimes he regretted that he had been so hasty in jumping off the Tin Woodman's foot. If only he'd had a moment to think, he might have hung on and been carried along to the wonder-working Oz, whom those people had expected to perform services for them no less comprehensive than what Vergrodius was in need of. He must say, he admired their courage. He himself on passing the Palace of Oz had never for a moment considered daring to consult the Great and Terrible.

In the end though, the frog king always consoled himself by two considerations for not having gone long on the expedition to Oz. In the first place, he could never have kept his place on the immense tin foot as it tramped the yellow brick road: he would simply have fallen off, late or soon, after he'd been carried miles in retreat from his own original goal. Secondly, how would he ever have (communicated with those people to let them know that he too had a great wish? He suspected that the alert-looking black dog (outlandish creature!) might eventually have sensed his presence, but then, it seemed, the dog did no more communicating with his companions than he, Vergrodius, would have been able to do.

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

So the froglet hopped on, as the years sped past, along the road in its northeasterly direction. He felt that he was growing old and grey, all his splendid youth and strength being lost to him in this consuming effort at self-rescue, when he might have been lording it at Gruneberg and trying to be a just king to his subjects. He did not however, forget to invoke daily the Oz charm that allowed each person to remain at the age he was—or to grow older—as he wished. At least Vergrodius was going to *appear* young, even if he was not.

At last—as it must, unless the exile king suffer an accident—the day came when he arrived in Legerdemain Lane. What excitement! The poor froglet was swooning with anxiety to know whether the wizard Wam was still in residence and whether he could unravel the horrid spell his magic emeralds had worked so long ago.

When he saw the cottage that Wam had once described to him, he hardly recognized it. ‘Cottage’ it could scarcely be called—with that vast market-hall-like excrescence to the right. Nor was he reassured by the sighs and groans that came from the strangely pulsating building.

As the frog slowly hopped nearer he saw a red wagon draw up, drawn by an odd animal that looked for all the world like a living sawhorse. Vergrodius watched from under the cover of a nasturtium leaf as an old man and a boy, clearly as mystified as himself, investigated the peculiar edifice. He heard all that they said to each other—and then his heart broke.

Wammuppirovocuck was not at home after all! The first impulse of the tiny frog king was to commit suicide in utter despair. He did not realize that, in the meantime, such a course had become impossible in oz.

His long years of travail, however, had brought him a modicum of prudence. He had in years gone by already missed two opportunities for salvation: when he passed the Palace of Oz without calling, and when he abandoned the Tin Woodman and his party. He resolved that he would not lose this possible third and last chance.

King Vergrodius girded up his loins and began hopping toward the red wagon. It took him all the rest of that day and far on into the night, but he did arrive at last in the young boy's ear.

The frog king's final spurt of self-assistance did the trick. The sleepers awoke and heard his tale. What the King of the Green Mountain had to reveal served to tip the motivation of the two adventurers in the direction of going to seek the lost and/or straying Wammuppirovocuck. The final stroke was delivered at dawn when Uncle Henry, rising bleary-eyed, said to the others: "I'm a silly old fool. Of course we'll go to Wam and the amber castle! instead of traveling to seek the Witch of the North. Though I didn't hear her name mentioned, she is undoubtedly among the delegates to PARPO!"

Therefore, they started out.

The wayfarers had one painful task to perform before campaigning on to southern Winkie-land. Unhappy as the experience would no doubt be, Henry Gale and young Zip felt it would be a dereliction of duty if they did not stop at the Dorothy's House National Monument to see what developments, if any, had occurred in the affairs of Aunt Em.

With a good deal of fear and trembling they halted the Red Wagon at the edge of the glade and looked toward the house. Nothing seemed very much changed. At least the horrid black smoke was no longer pouring from the chimney. Didn't the old place even look a bit less gloomy and grey than it had done before? The windows!: the one facing them was a blaze of scarlet color. As the old red wagon edged on a little to give them a view of the side of the cottage as well they saw that the window there too was all glorious with red.

Em's poppy plants!

"That soil Em dug up must be powerful stuff," said Henry in a low voice. (Even at this distance they were leery of speaking above a whisper for fear the unpredictable woman inside the house might hear them before they had their strategy planned.)

"Mm-hmm," agreed Zip gravely. He'd tangled with poppies

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

like those to his cost and was made uneasy at the sight of the flowers. "I sure hope Mrs. Gale knows what she's doing, having those things in her house."

"Em sure *acts* like she knows what she's doing," said Henry ruefully. "She always *was* right, you know. Well, come on. Let's see if we can get a reasonable word out of her today."

In the event, they got two words—but two words only—and though they made perfect sense they had an infinitely dispiriting effect upon the two travelers. The words were "Keep off!"

They were uttered by Emily Gale as she suddenly appeared in the doorway armed with a shotgun. (Where had she conjured *that* from, in non-hunting peace-loving Oz?!)

The two males stopped in their tracks. There was no arguing with a rifle. Granted: it couldn't kill them—if she fired—and there was every likelihood she would draw the line at gunning down her spouse in cold blood. But just an accidental blast, flying wild, could cause wounds that would bleed and be very painful. Natural laws of cause and effect had not been completely done away with in Oz and if a speeding projectile entered a solid body, even a human one, it could still make an ugly hole.

When no immediate gunburst occurred Henry took courage to argue a little, but he hadn't completed one sentence when his wife vouchsafed them one additional word: "Git!"

Therefore, they got. Reluctantly but rather quickly the two climbed back into the wagon, turned the Sawhorse, and drove off. Their last look at the green-complexioned housewife revealed her standing with the shotgun through the crook of her left arm. The knuckles of her right fist turned in her eye—but not, surely, to brush away any tear of remorse?

"Dern!" said Henry. "I'd got me a bright idea, too, about what we could do to help if we'd just once got inside..."

"What was that, Uncle?" said Zip, already brightening a little now that they were out of sight of the poppy-gaudy windows.

"I know a little bit about those magic tools the Wizard gave me and I remember that among 'em was a pair of swellobellows. If one of us could have distracted Em's attention, the other one

might 'a' nipped under the bed and got hold o' them and then maybe we could have got away with 'em."

"How could bellows help Aunt Em?"

"Oh, not Em! Sorry! I meant our little frog friend. We could have put him into the blow end of the bellows and pumped him up to a manageable size!"

Zip laughed delightedly at the idea. "He *is* awfully tiny, isn't he?.. First the Prince of Wates—and now this king I have to keep in my cap band so as not to lose him. Why can't we ever run across anybody of ordinary size to help?"

Henry too was amused at these conceits and glad to fall into talk that tended to dispel the gloom brought on by thinking about his wife. "It's kind of like the limerick, isn't it?" he pursued.

Zip was thoughtful for a second. "You mean the one about the young man from Devizes?" he hazarded.

"Say," said Henry, impressed again, as always, by the boy's range of knowledge, "you get around! Now how did you know that one?"

"Oh, I read all Dad's library... and he had a book of limericks. But which one are you thinking of?"

"Our royals put me in mind of it," said Uncle. "It goes like this;

"Chester Chappel, who lives in St. Paul,

Is obese and enormously tall,

While in Minneapolis

His brother, Sam Chappel, is

So small you can't see him at all."

They both enjoyed the silliness and as they rode on they tried to cap each other's quotes and quips. Then they came to the broad Munchkin River.

Since the time of Dorothy's first arrival in Oz the fearsome tigerish Kalidahs had of course been done away with. (One doesn't like to say 'killed'; no doubt they had been turned into useful and contented sunbeams.) At the same time the great ravine-like circular ditch that had demarcated the Kalidahs' territory had been filled in and so no longer presented an obstacle to travelers.

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

It was otherwise with the big blue river. For the benefit of the few road-farers in Oz it seemed scarcely worthwhile to engineer a great bridge over the Munchkin. Instead, a ferryman stood always on duty on one bank of the stream—and if you arrived from the other side you rang the big iron bell for him.

When our three travelers in the Red Wagon drew up on the east bank the ferryman was on the west. Zip jumped down to pull the bell, but Uncle Henry stopped him.

“Let’s do it our way, Zip,” he proposed.

“You mean...?”

“Yes, I think we might well venture it. We managed so well in tandem at the cottage roof—and you do need the practice. It’ll be a first too: you haven’t tried with more than one other person along. What if we dared with horse and wagon and all...?”

“Wow,” said Zip and was distinctly of two minds. But *he* would not be the one to curtail an adventure. “Well, okay, you’re the boss. I *hope* I’ve got the poof for it.”

“If we took a running start at Sawks’ top speed, that ought to give us plenty of lift-off,” speculated Henry. “You want to try it?”

So they drew back a quarter of a mile, recoiling the better to launch themselves, and then raced at blinding speed straight toward the river’s edge. *Just* as they came to the bank Zip and Henry, hands joined and spare hands grasping hard the wagon seat, concentrated for all they were worth and willed the equipage to lift into the air and carry them across by sheer mental magic and moral stamina.

Up, up! they sailed, high over the blue expanse of water, their brains nearly breaking with the effort. For an instant it was indeed as if their hinds had wings!

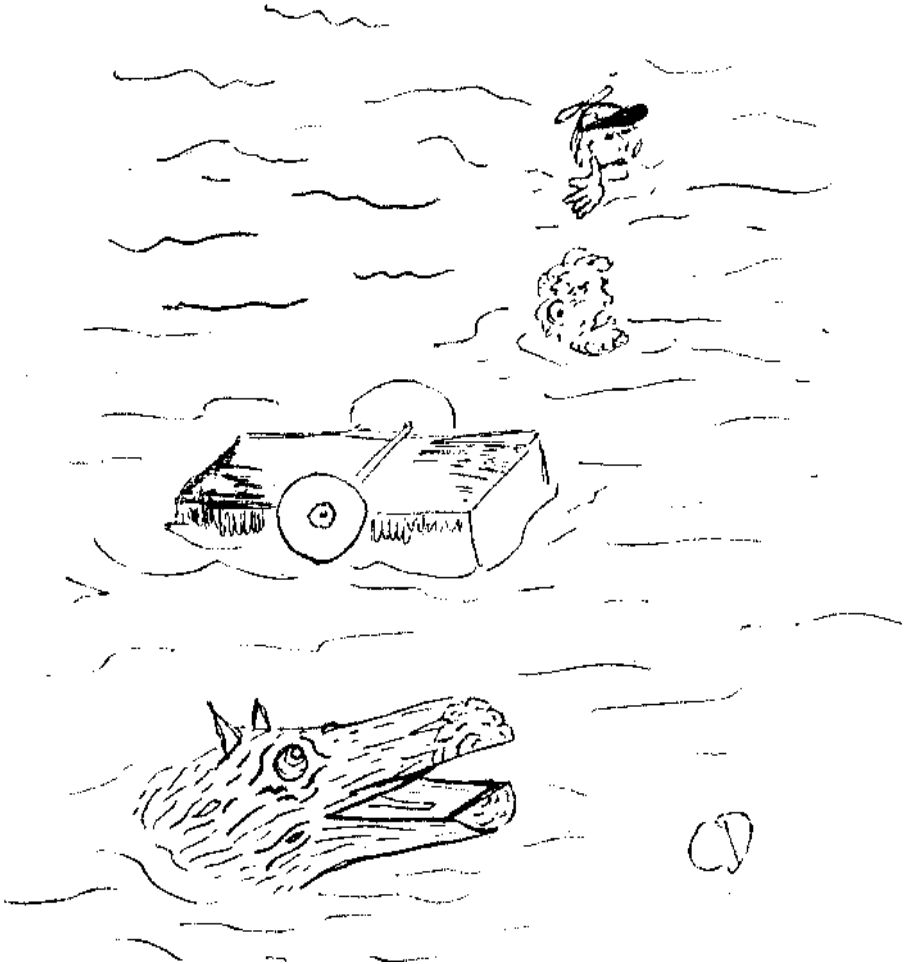
But then someone faltered; was it Henry? was it Zip? The strain was after all intense and one at least of the team of adventurers was only human. So down! like Phäeton they fell, and, though they had no apples with them, they tumbled horse over applectart into the middle of the Munchkin River..!

What a splash. But soon they had all bobbed to the surface again, even one king included (safely still tucked inside Zip’s

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

cap band, and the cap well down over the boy's ears). On with the deep blue river they rolled. It was quite refreshing. Only one thing: the Sawhorse and the Red Wagon were upside down, so it was no use requesting the intelligent horse to swim to the nearer shore. All that the others could do was hang onto the wheels—and hope for the best.

Henry saw the waterlogged blanket float past, trying its best to sink, and he made a lunge for it and secured it. The travelers might now be just as well pleased they had not had the back of the wagon loaded with magic gear, for by now they would not



UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

have had, anyway. And yet: if they had had any magic with them (other than that one intangible magic aptitude that had landed—well, ‘watered’—them in this predicament), they might not have come to such a pass.

Clinging to the wheel spokes the two took counsel.

“Would it be any good trying, again, to ‘project’ ourselves out of this, Uncle?” asked Zippiochoggolak.

“If we didn’t do better than we did from dry land, I can’t think we’d bring off much from a water take-off,” replied the older man doubtfully.

“Well, I’ll just give a try—on my own,” volunteered Zip. His brow furrowed, he let go of the wheel ... and rose—onto the top of the bottom of the wagon!

His talent must have been water-logged. That was as far as he got. Anyway he was now sitting down and rather more voyaging than drowning, and that was an improvement. He gave a hand to Uncle Henry and in a moment the farmer had struggled up to a position beside him.

And there they sat.

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

It was twilight and the sky was lavender, deepening to purple in the east. From somewhere in

the gloaming faint strains of sad music came stealing. Presently they awakened young Zip who had fallen into a half doze against the arm of Uncle Henry.

"Listen, Uncle," he said.

"Yep," confirmed the farmer. "I been hearin' that for a spell now. Wonder where it comes from." Zip looked out to sea—to river, rather—and observed that their wagon boat was no longer floating rapidly along in midstream. They seemed to have drifted into an eddy but an evening mist had risen from the surface of the stream and now obscured both banks, so he had no way of knowing how close they might be to either. The boy shivered. The air was just tantalizingly cool but in their wet clothes the two voyagers felt distinctly chilly.

Suddenly something green (blue-green actually, since this was still well within the borders of Munchkin territory) stuck up out of the lapping waters. A sort of reed leaf! Then there were more, and then cat-tails, and then tall stalks that almost looked like sugar cane—not that they had ever seen sugar cane growing—*or* water bamboos, which is in fact what these were.

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

Uncle Henry had noticed them as soon as Zip and he said, "Grab a-hold, lad. We must be near shore. We ought to be able to pull our way along hauling on these reeds."

Now for a bit it was turn-about and the arms of man and boy were the motive power for propelling the Red Wagon and Sawhorse. That was fair play. But it was also a severe struggle and they made but inchy progress. Many plants were torn loose from their moorings in the unequal contest, but at last the whole water-logged and unrivervorthy craft came in among ever thicklier-bristling reed beds and the sideboards of the wagon scraped soggy bottom.

The travelers still had several yards to wade before they stepped on firm blue land and even then "I don't see how we're going to get the wagon righted, standing waist deep," worried Henry.

"Never mind that now, Uncle," answered Zip. "Let's go for a trot along the bank. We're sure to run into somebody who can lend us a team to haul 'em out. — It might warm us up a bit too."

But a trot along the bank it was not to be. They had gone but a dozen paces when a gate loomed up out of the fog. It was a wrought-iron waist-high gate and it sagged open on its hinges where it hung between two high, if ruinous, lengths of wall. If there was to be a trot it clearly must be through the gate—and inland.

They stepped within the wall and at once Zip noticed a broken signpost lying half concealed in a bank of brambles. He pulled it free, turned it round, and, on what remained of the board, he and Uncle were able to make out the word "... CITY."

"Hmm," mused Henry. "That tells what but not which. I don't think it could be the Sapphire City. That's in a different part of the country altogether."

Zip let fall the board and they passed on. It could scarcely be said that the place much resembled a city. In the still-lingering mist all they could make out was the trees and shrubbery of what appeared to be a great gone-wild garden. They wandered through broken arbors and past uncared-for faint-scented herb

borders. Once they thought they heard whispering: just out of sight behind a flowering hedge; but as they hurried near and called out there was no answer but a faint trill of laughter from two voices—and then silence. There was no one to be seen.

They came presently to another gate which gave on an expanse of water—but it was not the river. This was clearly a partly artificial lagoon: the faintly silvery water lay motionless and the shore line was a mortared stone retaining wall that ran off straight on both sides. Too, the fog from the river penetrated less completely here. They could make out ancient stone and brick walls across the water.

How to get across? For, otherwise there was no way to go but back.

Moored at a tumbledown jetty were a number of small gondolas. Then they noticed a sagging finger-post that said “EMBARK”.

The two, man and boy, looked at each other, shrugged, and embarked.

Strangely, the gondolas had no poles, but as they took seats on the thwarts their black boat moved off of itself, out upon the lagoon, and somewhere a concertina seemed to be playing a barcarolle.

As they glided over the water other gondolas were seen to slide soundlessly along in other parts. Eagerly Henry and Zip looked for passengers in the boats whom they might hail to ask where they were. But though they caught glimpses of white hands trailing in the dark water or an occasional black eye-mask or enveloping cape there seemed to be no substantial *people* there: certainly none who approached near enough to speak to.

They drew near the quay on the farther side and the pair expected their barque to pull up to anchorage, but to their surprise it continued on, entering now a canal that debouched on the lagoon. They glided among old picturesque buildings: brownish yellow or terra cotta, for the most part; crumbling plaster, rusty ironwork, green-black water lapping at worn stone steps. Here, at last, they would see inhabitants of the

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

city, they felt sure.

By now the fog had dissipated completely but the resultant visibility did not increase the numbers of anything living to be seen. "It's like a ghost city, isn't it?" whispered Zip in awe.

Yet all the while, faintly, far away, they could hear mandolins playing. Once, as they passed an open portway giving on a tiny square, an odor of verbena came to them. A perfume shop? or a very thriving garden? Some lady's boudoir? Another time a muffled sound of sobbing reached their ears—or a clash of dueling swords—or a drinking song. But never were there any performers of these actions to be seen.

They passed under stairway bridges, past ancient palaces, and once beneath a passage built out over the narrow canal from one house to another. As they stared, a handkerchief floated down from the small window in the bridge house and sank in night-darkening water.

For some little time candleshine had begun to be seen here and there. Tempting odors of exotic dishes were wafted to their nostrils. Suddenly they realized with a pang how vastly hungry they were. But if any of the lighted doorways were those of restaurants they were not to know. The magic gondola glided on.

Once or twice it did seem the boat was drawing near to a landing stage. There would be a pause but just as the two passengers were about to stand and be ready to step ashore it would slip silently on again. Now faintly in the far distance, as night came on apace, they heard cannon fire. Were they getting near the scene of some battle?—or was the battle line moving toward them? Skirling martial music came to their ears: of trumpets and cornets, of bagpipes! Deep-bellowed war commands. The scream of horses: so shocking though so far away. And now the night-dark was lightened again but by the unholy glow of vast fires. A whole section of the city must be in flames! Yet they SAW no fire; only its lurid reflex.

Now people at last! The boat was gliding out across a wider waterway when, just opposite to them, the doors of a great palace were thrown open and people in ball dress streamed out:

harlequins and farthingaled ladies, gentlemen in black knee breeches and cocked hats, grisettes with dark cheek patches and low-cut bodices. All were grotesquely masked, but the masks did not conceal the air of desperation that seemed to drive the crowd on. Quickly it dispersed, the haunted revelers hurrying away down dark passages and alleyways.

The gondola moved unhurryingly on, now once more past garden gates, beyond which they had glimpses of distant red-reflecting domes and towers. The waterway widened ever further and now they were to pass under the windows of a last tall garden house. Light shone from a single balconied window—where a lady was leaning out! Even in the near dark they could see that she was a southern beauty and she wore a ball gown, a tall mantilla comb—and behind her ear was a single blood-red rose.

Her they would be able to speak to! As the boat drew close under the balcony both men called out... But only this: silently, with a mysterious smile of Mona Lisa, the lady lowered her gaze to them and even as silently her hands were lifted to her head, she freed the rose, and as the gondola drifted smoothly on below she let it fall.

Slowly the flower fluttered down. The voyagers had a feeling it might be only a rose they dreamt. Certainly it wafted and drifted as if it were made of tissue paper. Yet when the flower fell into Zip's outstretched hands it seemed a real and fleshy rose enough. He stuck it in his cap band.

When they looked aloft again the lady was gone. They caught just a glance of the French doors closing: the last long vertical strip of candle-light; and they heard a few notes, broken off, of a spinet playing in a room far away.

It seemed very dark afterwards.

The boat passed on over lapping water. Now it was too dark to see anything, but presently they *heard*—a wooden sound of horse's neighing!

The gondola bumped against a sagging wooden dock and it seemed that now the voyage really was at an end. Zip and Uncle

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

Henry clambered up on the jetty, and looked back to see—darkness. The water, the distant city, even their gondola, had disappeared; nor did they hear anything but a single wistful chord plucked from a distant harp.

In the other direction a vague but familiarish shape loomed. Again there was the glad neighing of a wooden horse. It was the Sawhorse and the Red Wagon: right side up, in their right minds, and ready to roll. In the back of the wagon they even found the blanket, neat, folded, and—dry.

Just as they stepped aboard Zippiochoggolak noticed at the end of the dock, half obscured by a tree, an iron lamp post which supported a bracket and from the bracket hung a weathered board with burnt-in lettering. This time it was quite legible. It said: "ROMANTICITY".

C H A P T E R

F I F T E E N

Their accident at the river had brought the adventurers away from the yellow brick road. They now found themselves on a liver-colored road that led into the Quadling Country. This they realized clearly when they next morning woke in their blanket under the wagon and saw all red about them.

"We're getting on," said Henry cheerfully as they breakfasted from a fried-banana palm and a scrambled-egg-plant. "We should get there today."

"Yes," agreed Zip. "If I know my geography though, we want to bear to the right. No use getting lost in the middle of Quadlingland. By rights we ought to be aiming at the Quadling-Winkie border."

"You're the boss," acquiesced the old farmer amiably and let Zip take the reins as they started out.

The Lad of Light was as good as his intention—with the result that about noon they came to a green country instead of a yellow one.

"Lordee!" said Henry old-fashionedly. "We must 'a' overshoot. I *thought* we were getting a mite northerly. I hadn't rightly figured any longer to see the Emerald Country, leastways not this trip—but now that we're here is it any good stopping at the capital?"

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

“Oh, I don’t see why,” said Zip, who still had that fear that somebody might wave a wand and solve all their problems, thus putting a stop to their adventures. For the Lad of Light the great thing was to do things for *oneself*, not always duck off to a court of higher instance to let a father—or mother—figure do all the problem-resolving.

“Anyway, look there!” Zippiochoggolak went on, pointing with the (furled) whip. Sharp in the distant west rose a broad and perfect cone, the loveliest mountain in the world, or, rather, out of it. “That must be Gruneberg!” he cried.

That was it; not much doubt about it. What excitement reigned in Zip’s cap band as the tiniest frog in the world, peeping out, saw the biggest mountain in Oz. For the first time in twenty-three years King Vergrodius was seeing his native land. It was half his life away since he had left it.

But, oh! alack and alas, he could never dream of showing himself in his present and always unregenerated form. How his successor—and his subjects—would roar with laughter when a tiny amphibian you could just *about* see announced that he planned once more to rule over them.

“No!” he shrieked—and kept on shrieking until some time later, when the rattle of the wagon wheels stopped and Uncle Henry and Zip alighted to take their lunch. Only then did Zip have the possibility of hearing the wee cries coming from his cap.

“What is it?” asked the boy in consternation.

“Please!” The froglet folded his forefeet in supplication—not that Zip would have been able to see the gesture without a magnifying glass. “Please! No matter what happens—or whom you may meet—on the Green Mountain, promise me you will not reveal my presence.”

Zip chewed his lip. “Well, okay, if that’s the way you want it.” And he told Uncle of what had been agreed.

With the promise gained it seemed as if the frog king would relax and enjoy his homecoming. After lunch they crossed the border of Gruneberg and rode along green lanes beside fair

meadows where green cows ate the green grass. Then they came to foothills and passed into a green forest. The road had lost its liver color, of course; it was now a dark tile green.

They could no doubt have traveled faster but the newcomers' curiosity about the Green Mountain had been greatly aroused and they wanted to see it. It was evening by the time they drew near the environs of Yeshilstad, the capital. First they had to traverse a last outreach of the wide-spreading Vervald and in its steep-sloping junglous depths they lost their way.

Another hour was spent in fruitless searching to rekind their road before they stumbled across a humble forester's cottage where they thought they might ask the way.

A worn-looking woman with chestnut hair came to the door. "Yeshilstad? Yes, it's that way—" and she pointed off northwest toward a higher and even thicker part of the forest.

"But you must be tired—or anyway bored—with your journey in this endless forest," she went on. "I know I got bored enough with it in my time! Come in—and have a cup of nettle tea. It'll set you up so you can press on."

The travelers were pleased at such attention and did not say no. A little homely comfort would be delightful after their rugged nights out on the road. They hitched the Sawhorse to a hornbeam and followed the woman into the cottage.

"I didn't always live here," explained the hazel-eyed woman somewhat unmotivatedly, "but when the old body who had the place moved on I took it over. I'd got fed up living in that tree, where all my distresses began—"

"Distresses'?" repeated Henry, sipping at his cup and sensing a story.

"Yes," admitted their hostess. "I'd been a no-good, let's face it. I was a wood nymph in those days. Now I've been demoted to tree sprite, second class. I couldn't bear to go on living in

that tree. It had all mod cons, but it was there I pulled the biggest boo-boo of my life. Can you imagine?: the king of this idiotic country was in love with me! But fool that I was, all I could

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

see was he had eyes like a tromped-on toad-frog and no chin to speak of. I never tried to find out what kind of a person he was inside. He may have been kind and honorable—he probably was—how was I to know? I just thought he was ugly, and so I turned him into the frog he looked like.

“I’ve had plenty of time since then to repent of my hastiness. My ‘frog’ king had given me some wishing emeralds, you see, and I figured I really had it made. Now I could get all my heart desired—so what need had I any longer of a toadish suitor?”

“Woe is me! Pride goes before a fall. I dropped the magic necklaces on a night table and lay down for a kip. When I woke up they were gone... Who knows?! I never found out who took them—though I suspect some squirrels I used to put up with in that tree I lived in. The skunks! I soon showed them the door—though in fact I never got any proof it was them who’d made off with the emeralds.

“After that I wasted a lot of years wandering through the forest, looking for my lost talismans. I never found them, of course. If I’d had the slightest brain I’d have put those squirrels to the third-degree; they were the only ones who’d had the entrée to my boudoir. Instead, I eventually ate them.”

Her audience was rather shocked. After all, in Oz they had that odd rule that you didn’t eat anybody after you’d once got acquainted with and made a friend of him. By then he was ‘people’ and not just another edible commodity.

That was just one of the bad habits the wood nymph had developed: taking a fancy for eating fried squirrels, a delicacy. By the way, that is the traditional fate of dogs in the manger: those who spoil the satisfaction of others without even doing themselves any good thereby. They often get fried—or roasted.

Now, to follow up their nettle tea, she offered her guests gin—and again they were shocked. “Gin?” said Henry Gale. “Dear me, madam. I didn’t know anyone drank in Oz. Where do you get it from?” he asked, intrigued.

“Oh, I don’t get it straight,” admitted the dyed-haired hostess. “There are so few gin mills in

Oz. But there's no law against the purveying of ginger. I just lay in a supply of that. I chop it in half and just use the front part. Simple."

Still, the gentlemen declined to join the lady in imbibing. After all, a large readership had their eyes pinned on the doings of Uncle Henry Gale; he had to watch his step. To cover his discomfiture he began talking about his and Zip's quest.

"You're looking for a necromancer?" said the wood nymph. "Is he any good? I wonder if he could help me."

"Of course he's good!" declared Zip stoutly. "He's my dad... Why? What do you want? Your emeralds back?"

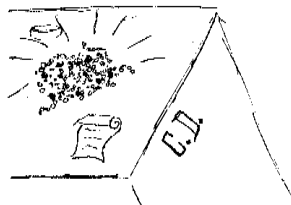
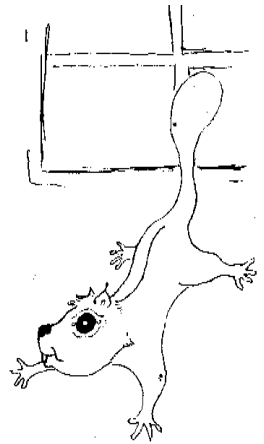
"No! To hell with them. I'd like to find my suitor again—and apologize. I was a criminal idiot."

"Well, gosh," said Uncle Henry, who was always prepared to let a repentant sinner start over, "what about it, Zip? There's plenty of room in the wagon. It won't matter to Mr. Wammuppirovocuck, will it?: to work one more wonder? if he feels up to working any at all..."

Zip had his own (romantic) reasons for falling in whole-heartedly with the proposal. Thus, kissing the unwashed dishes goodbye but carrying her gin bottle with her, the wood nymph Lorna joined the travelers in their journey to seek Wam, the Weird and Wonderful.

At a rustic inn on the outskirts of the mountain city of Yeshilstad, where they spent the night,

Zip had a chance to speak to King Vergrodius again. The king was ecstatic. "Isn't she *lovely!*?" he thrilled, and his great (though infinitesimal) eyes were starry.



C H A P T E R

S I X T E E N

They'd never seen anything so yellow.

There was the amber castle standing on its crag, the whole thing sticking up like a pencil of light against the meridian. It caught the shine of noon and since there wasn't a cloud in the sky the effect was blinding.

"That's where the Lords of Light hang out, you say?" asked Lorna interestedly. "What are they noted for?"

"Nothing much—so far," admitted Zippiochoggolak, the Lad of Light. "But their time is coming. They have great powers—which of course they only use for good. But those powers have to do with everyday miracles like the sun shining on the earth and the earth going round on its axis, so we don't much notice their wizardry and take it for granted.

"Also, of course, they're my family," reminded the Lad, and that comment was self-explanatory. The travelers had all recognized the site immediately and this was both surprising and not. Not: for the unique scene had been so often described by his mother to one of the adventurers and by him recently to the others. Indeed, what other castle in Oz, or elsewhere, stood on a shimmering pinnacle of golden sandstone jutting out over a Deadly Desert or gleamed from bottom to top with golden light? And yet, perhaps it was a *little* surprising that they should know

it, for not one of them had ever been there before.

The sandy way led upward fairly dizzily. When they came to the golden drawbridge they felt, perhaps, a little let-down. One expected a fanfare or gleaming-armored knights drawn up in order or at least a fierce gate-guardian demanding to know their business. There was nothing like that. The drawbridge was down and they could walk right across, while looking deep down to where heat shimmers rose from the molten gold that filled the moat.

"Mom used to talk about the Golden Moat," recalled Zip, pretending casualness about what filled the others with awe. "If ever there should be need, she said, the bridge goes up. Then it's quite impossible for anything animal, vegetable, or mineral to cross to the castle without getting gilded for its pains."

"Lawks," said the tree sprite, second class. "All that gold and a person can't get at it." The others looked at her in surprise. "What would anyone want to get at it for?" they inquired, really wondering.

"Well, it's gold, isn't it?" said Lorna, equally puzzled. "Everybody wants gold, don't they?"

"I wouldn't think so," said Zip, "—unless you're a sculptor and need it for doing statues."

"Or a dentist," said the prosaic Uncle Henry.

"It's not as pretty as silver," said Zip and stroked the lapel of his silver silk suit.

"I reckon if gold wasn't so rare," opined Henry Gale, "—most places, that is— we'd think it looked pretty vulgar and tawdry. Bronze, for example, has a much nobler look."

Lorna just stared at them and scratched her head. By now the wagon was over the bridge and within the great castle court. The place seemed to be as deserted as when the necromancer Wam had first wandered in there so many years before.

"Yes," reassured Zip, "Mom said they didn't need a lot of servants. Everything ticked over by itself. The lords spent all *their* time up in the towers doing their astronomical calculations. I suppose that's where they are now."

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

“What about the ladies?” asked the ex-wood nymph.

“Oh, they stay pretty much in the frauenzimmer, spinning sunbeams and keeping the place clear of stardust. Let’s go there first—if we can find it. That’s where my Mom is sure to be.”

They still had not encountered any person by the time they came to a broad doorway where a heavy gold curtain was looped back with a golden rope. This seemed pretty clearly to be the seraglio but aside from an abandoned mandolin and the pinktipped butts of some Fatimas in a wide shallow dish there was no sign of the ladies’ having been there.

The Lad of Light was getting worried. “Come on,” he took charge. “This is getting to be not a joke. Mom always said everything ran by itself here, on solar energy, but she never mentioned that *nobody* lived here. Let’s go up in the tower...”

The castle, for all its great size, was rather simply laid out and the adventurers had no trouble in locating the three stairways that started from the central court and ran up into the three towers. They chose the gold stairway as being the most likely and quickly climbed up the fourteen turns to the top. There a softly glowing ivory door locked against them, and no amount of knocking calling brought anyone to open it. They could hear a soft mechanical humming from beyond the door but that was all.

“Dad’s not here!—OR the Lords,” announced Zip finally, when they had tried all three staircases in vain. He looked rather scared. “Nor Mom, of course... What do we do now?”

The disappointment of all was intense. They had supposed the solution to their problems was close at hand. In this place of potent magic how could they go unrequited? Yet now, those problems far from being resolved here and now, they wondered if they would ever be.

The adventurers had given no thought to what a next step might be. At last Henry Gale put forward the obvious proposal. “I reckon we just got to go get Ozma and them’s help after all,” he said, and pulled his beard. “Seems too bad. We were doing so well, sort of, on our own.”

“Yeah.” Zip kicked the wall. “Well, it gives us another day or two’s travel and that’s neat... But I was so sure Dad was going to cure all our troubles, sort of privately, as you might say. Now he’s just one more problem we’ve got to solve: where he is. And Mom.”

“You’ve got one more mystery on top of that, seems to me,” said Lorna and took a quick swig from her bottle. “The secret of the deserted castle[§].”

§ See Alexander Volkov: *The Secret of the Deserted Castle*—although, of course, that was a different castle. Editor’s note.

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

Since the wayfarers had the run of the castle they could at any rate make free with it for a night's lodging before setting out on the final run to Winkiezia. Lorna snuggled down under soft Persian rugs in the seraglio while Henry and Zip got comfortable in another, more masculinely appointed bedroom.

The males had a little bull-session before they went to sleep. King Vergrodius, of course, was on about how superb his Lorna was. Uncle Henry and Zip just looked at each other. They hadn't the heart or the least wish to spoil the frog king's dream but they could not fail to wonder how he could be so blind to the fact that what might indeed once have been a lovely wood nymph was now a haggard and distinctly plus-fortyish-looking lush, whose henna'd hair was going green at the roots.

"Well, my friend," countered Henry, just to be saying something, "why don't you reveal yourself to her now? You've heard that her only wish is to beg your forgiveness for the nasty trick she played you."

"Are you mad!?" cried the kinglet. "Oh, forgive my bluntness! dear Mr. Gale. But really: how could I let my darling see me before I am restored to at least the shape she knew? I long for her acceptance still; at least: I long for it *again*—for I must confess that through these long years of my enchantment my

thoughts of her were bitter ones only. And yet ... when I saw her again... Well, it passeth all understanding, but she appeared to me as lovely as she ever was in her prime—though I see that she drinks and smokes and who knows what besides...?”

As he got ready for bed Zip said: “Gee, this rose is just as fresh as ever! It’s been two days now. I’d better put it in water. I want to keep it as a souvenir of our adventures.”

“Yes, you do that,” encouraged Uncle Henry, lying with hands folded behind his head. “Two days for a rose out of water is pretty good...” Then as he mused on, suddenly, “What day is this?!” he squawked.

“Why, um, gee, I don’t know,” said Zip.

“It’s April seventh,” said the king in the cap band, though how he knew is anybody’s guess. “Ooh, lord!” moaned Henry Gale. “It’s our wedding anniversary! Poor Em. She had so many bright ideas about celebrating that day with me—and here I am at the uttermost other end of Oz and she under some awful spell that I can’t even begin to guess what is.” The poor fellow seemed quite stricken at the return of the gloomy thoughts.

Zip wanted to be consolatory but as a matter of fact all he could think of to say was something explanatory. “Gosh, Uncle,” he demurred, “you couldn’t be in much doubt about that, could you? You do see, don’t you?, that Aunt’s digging around in that dirt under the old house must have brought her in direct contact with the remains of that old deceased witch. Then, since nothing ever dies in Oz—though it might be ‘destroyed’, in other words change its form completely—it’s clear, I think, that the life force of that old witch has gone into Mrs. Gale.”

“Thanks, Zip,” said Henry. Was he being ironical? But the gentle old fellow was not given to irony. Perhaps Uncle was thanking him because the boy had at last peeled from his eyes any illusions about what had gone, and was going, on. Now it would be easier for him. For it *is* easier—indeed, it’s the only way—to deal with a problem: when you accept all the firm facts of a situation.

The three men were just drifting off when the most terrible

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

scream rang through the castle halls. They sat up and stared at each other in consternation!? "Where did it come from!?" cried Henry.

"The cellars, I think," called Zip, already out the door.

The walls of all the rooms and corridors in the amber castle glowed always with inner light, so there was no difficulty in seeing, no matter the time of day. As they raced along, two more shrieks followed the first in quick succession. Then there was a gruesome silence; but those two dreadful cries had been enough to orient the searchers. In the basement they ran southeast along an echoing vaulted passage and came to an arched opening in the castle wall. The bricked pavement ahead sloped down a little and beyond the low aperture they could see something gleaming dully gold.

"The moat," breathed Zip in horror.

Yes, more's the pity. Lorna, the tree sprite, hadn't been able to withstand her delight in pretty things. In the gloom of night she had crept down along castle corridors and stairways until she came to a place where she could see close up the still-standing molten gold. Against the outer dark the heat shimmers didn't show and all she saw was the fascinating luminous golden glow. It really would be lovely to bathe! in such radiance, she thought, in her drunken stupor (she had finished the last of her gin that evening).

Cautiously she leaned down and stuck a fingertip in.

Then her dreadful scream rang out. It was like touching liquid fire. The shock caused the woman to lose her precarious balance and in she fell, having just time to utter two more Edward-II-like shrieks before the swirling gold closed over her head.

When her friends arrived she was nowhere to be seen. However, the relative lightness of flesh caused her body to lift slowly to the surface of the much heavier, though liquid, gold. When the men saw it surface Zip ran to the castle kitchens and found a clothes pole and returned.

Now for a bit it was touch and go. The gold congealing about

the pole end made it so heavy that the two males could scarcely support it. The drifting golden clump was just out of reach. They kept stirring and the slight eddies made the body slowly drift within range and then they could pole it close under the castle wall.

Of lifting up the gold-cased figure the few yards to the sill of the run-off port where the men knelt there was no question. "Go get the Sawhorse!" commanded Henry Gale. "No, I'll go. Zip, see if you can find rope in that kitchen of yours."

"I already know where there is some," returned the boy urgently. "The clothes line!" Off they hurried to their respective tasks.

Things went according to the impromptu plan. Within three quarters of an hour they had the golden statue of a wild-looking wood nymph lying awkwardly on one gold elbow and one gold toe in the back of the Red Wagon. The figure was still yellow-hot and apt to run.

There could be no question of attempting to sleep any more that night. "Let's take it and get!" said Uncle to the faithful Sawhorse. The equipage dashed out of the court, over the drawbridge, and down the winding sand-strewn trail to leveler ground. As they looked back, the amber castle glowed translucently in the moon-dark night and kept its secret.

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

The travelers had, after all, to eat something now and then! The prepared-food vegetation in that part of the Winkie Country was a little bit out of the ordinary. Therefore they decided they'd pretend they'd wanted a continental breakfast all along. They loaded their plates (plain gold ones borrowed from the amber castle) with pumpernickel, smoked eel, a sort of yellow Stilton, and some wienerbröd, and sat down under a jigsaw-puzzle tree to discuss the meal.

Nobody knew what King Vergrodius as froglet ate, but he wasn't starving. On the contrary: he was vigorous and vocal. It was past bird-song time in the morning and the two humans didn't make much noise eating, so Zip was able to hear, from his cap band, a tiny voice saying, "Oh, do hurry up, fellows! We must get on. Don't you know she's suffering the most fearful agonies inside there? She's fully alive! and that's what makes it so fiendish: think of the mind-destroying pain of burn sensation over one hundred percent of the body! My poor darling!"

Vergrodius broke down again and wept... while the others finished their Danish and licked their fingers.

They were just going to weigh anchor when a surprising thing happened. The breakfasters had been sitting beside a tributary of the Winkie River. When Zippiochoggolak happened to glance

once more at the saffron ripples, he suddenly caught sight of a great yellow fish with its head out of water, staring at him. He could swear it looked surprised and he was *almost* ready to swear it also winked. Then the yellow head sank again beneath the water.

Next instant a vast bubble broke the surface of the stream. Or "bubble"? It was more like a big opalescent balloon, for it floated up clear of the water and began to dance in the morning breeze. Rapidly it made its way toward them over the river, glistening in all the colors of an Ozian rainbow: puce, rose madder, aquamarine, cinnabar, and battleship grey.

What was it? bubble, balloon, or ball? It was hard to say if its 'skin' was a film of air/water molecules or sheerest silk or even gauzy rubber. Anyway, as it came close it looked a good deal like Billie Burke's bubble in the *Wizard* film, though of the wrong colors, of course. Then, just like Miss Burke's, the ball abruptly vanished and there stood ...Wam, the Weird and Wonderful.

"Dad!" screamed Zippiochoggolak and rushed to him. He recognized him instantly, and why not? In Oz no one ever changes in appearance unless he feels like it.

"Come to my arms, my beamish boy!" cried the necromancer, and father and son were tenderly reunited.

"But what...?!"

"Okay," said Wammuppirovocuck, "I'll tell you the whole story." The wizard was not slow to climb up to the wagon seat beside Henry Gale. "I can hitch a lift with you? You seem to be pointed in my direction."

The flabbergasted wagon-travelers could not match Wam in aplomb. They gasped out three or four explanatory sentences, as "We've been hunting for you," "Mr. Gale here found and rescued me," "We went to the cottage in Legerdemain Lane," and the able wonder-worker could guess the rest. Later of course he asked for the entire history in detail.

"That Prince of Wates got too much for me," confessed the errant sorcerer. "I've never failed so signally before in anything I set out to accomplish. Well, yes, I did... once: when I tried to

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

find you, my dear boy," and he pulled Zip's cap down over his eyes in affection. "But that failure brought on only quiet despair, not frantic desperation as now. I dispersed my employees to their homes and fled into the wilderness.

"I wandered about for three days, half mad. Then I came to my senses a bit. One does, eventually. I suppose if I'd had my wits properly about me I'd have set off for the Emerald City to ask assistance of the wise ones there. But what I principally longed for now was a little gentle sympathy. I headed out to hunt up your mother—"

"See, Uncle?" said Zip, justified at last. To his father: "I told him that's what you'd do."

"Bright boy," acknowledged the fond parent. "But then you've always been that.

"Well, I turned myself into a swallow—"

Henry Gale's gape was audible. "So you do still do magic? People kept saying you never practiced it anymore ... "

"This was an emergency, I figured," the necromancer excused himself. "Besides, it's a trick I can do 'bare': without magic 'properties'. That way, I rationalized, it wasn't such genuine sorcery."

"But, Dad," put in Zip, "why didn't you use that knack to solve your big problem? I mean the outsize prince."

"Oh, I could have turned him into a pea in a pod—but that wouldn't have solved anything. He didn't want to be anything *else*. He just wanted to be himself, average human-size. My transformation trick doesn't operate that way."

Privately Uncle Henry was having some little doubts about Wam. The magician hadn't, it seemed, years before, considered the loss of his son a big enough emergency to risk practising forbidden magic to get him back; yet now a little—or, say, a huge—irritation like the presence of the Prince of Wates made him at once break the law.

Still, Henry would be charitable. Maybe with the passing years Wam had come to feel those arbitrary anti-magic laws were not very justified and hence not so binding.

But Zip was prompting, eager for the story: "So, swift as the flying arrow you went to Mom's abode?"

"There were one or two small interruptions," confessed Wam. "Part way along, a giant eagle swooped down on me, no doubt intending to swallow me like a swallow would swallow a gnat. I was obliged to turn myself into a rhinoceros in mid-air. It isn't a gestalt I would ordinarily choose but it was the first thing of great size that popped into my head in my sudden fright.

"If I'd had even an instant to consider—! But no. Down I dropped like a boulder and landed on my head in a fortunately placed straw stack. I was out cold for three days! Passers-by later confirmed it was three days past what I remembered it being. And when I came to myself I wasn't myself, if you see what I mean.

"In the first place I was a rhinoceros—and that was so seldom. It was a size and shape I didn't care for all. In the second place, I hadn't a clue who I really was, and so for a week I wandered around Oz—well, mostly in the Quadling Country—as the Reluctant Rhinoceros.

"Gradually, like a veil slowly lifting, my amnesia cleared and I realized who I was and what my business was. I had learned a lesson the hard way. I changed myself into a pterodactyl and flew on to the amber castle."

"And found Mom?" asked Zip eagerly.

"No!" Wammuppirovocuck was still under the impression of his surprise and shock. "She'd vanished without a trace! and everyone else from the castle with her. There was a still warm dinner on the table—just like the *Mary Celeste*—which I proceeded to eat. But there was nobody in sight."

"Pardon me, sir," broke in the civil Henry Gale. "How many people actually live at the castle? It seemed very peculiar to us too that there wouldn't be *anybody* about: no servants, no neighbors—"

"Well, 'neighbors': in that location and given who the castledwellers are, that isn't so surprising. As for servants: everything's automated at the Castle of Light. But that all three Lords, the

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

First Lady, all those aunts,, and the ladies-in-waiting: that *all* of them should be gone: it passes all understanding.

"I've been hunting for your mother ever since," finished Wam simply.

"Under water?" asked his son incredulously. "Oh, I'd just popped in there for a morning dip," said Wam airily. There was a rather charming air of insouciance about this necromancer. "I always take a shape that's most convenient for the purpose. The only one I *don't* take is human," he added drolly, "- unless I find myself in the vicinity of a clothes tree. By the way, let's stop at the first one we see. It's a little cool in the morning air, now that I come to think of it."

The others passed him the blanket and then he was quite comfortable. As it happened, they came to no outfitting plants, nor to any towns where a shop might have supplied Wam's needs. Eventually he asked permission to turn the blanket into regulation magician's garb, which was willingly granted.

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

Young Zippiochoggolak was highly gratified at the success of his campaign to take the expedition a bit easily. If they had whizzed along as fast as the tireless Sawhorse was capable of doing, they would undoubtedly have missed being in the proper place and time to run up against Zip's father when they did. The boy's own quest was accomplished! even if quite by well-staged accident. Now they could go home.

No, darn, they couldn't, he very soon recalled. The group of adventurers still had on the agenda:

1. undoing what amounted to an enchantment of Mrs. Gale;
2. restoring the Prince of Wates to manageable size;
3. restoring the King of the Green Mountain to *his* proper shape and kingdom;
4. delivering the ex-wood nymph Lorna from her frightful transformation into a gold statue;
5. finding Zip's mother—and, for that matter, all her family.

Therefore, Zip concluded that it would probably be best to put on some speed, if the tale of their mission was not to prove endless. When Wammuppirovocuck had finished relating the story of his adventures Zip said, "I'll ask the Sawhorse to switch to top speed, right?"

"Mmm, fine," agreed Henry Gale amiably. "Er—in which

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

direction?"

That was after all a question of some moment. Zip's own first impulse was to hurry home to Legerdemain Lane where his necromancer Dad could get at what instruments of magic remained to him, throw rules to the wind, and get cracking on unworking a few spells.

That necromancer's own personal mission, however, was now to find his estranged and newly re-lost wife. Hence, Wam thought in terms of casting about further in the lands of the Winkies and Quadlings.

And Uncle Henry voted for carrying on to Winkiezia, where surely the crowned heads (many of which were also magically endowed) could be put together to bring some clarity into the problems of the adventurers.

It was this latter course which won the day. Indeed, in view of the gravity and the multiplicity of the friends' goals, it might have seemed clear from the beginning that eventually the highest professional help would have to be called in. The Sawhorse was told to carry on in the direction they had been going, only now as fast as might be.

The jinx was broken. Right away, one after another, solutions to their problems began to be accomplished—and they stopped getting any new ones—for a while! The first such resolution occurred about an hour and a half after the Sawhorse had turned on the heat. It was then that a curious optical illusion began to be observed.

"Say, isn't Winkiezia north by northeast?" said old Uncle Henry, who was at the reins while his young fellow adventurer and father talked cozily together in the back of the dashing wagon.

"Of course!" said father and son as one and stood up to look over the seat-back in the direction of travel.

"Then how come the sun's shining straight ahead?" said Henry, pointing with the whip. "This isn't Australia." The old farmer had been in both countries and knew.

Zip took a quick decko to their rear and affirmed that at least

one sun was still shining from due south, it now being noon. What then was that golden glow ahead in the north?

They were not left long in doubt. They ran toward the glow and the glow met them as fast. Like a vast sunburst the luminance loomed and filled the sky, then passed directly overhead. It was low enough that the company could distinguish the under side of great sun chariots, the golden wheels spinning sparks like Catherine wheels and horses of Phoebus stamping the air. With a vast silent whoosh the fiery caravan passed over and slowly dimmed and retreated in the southwest.

"The Lords of Light!" said Wam, awed, and the others felt that nothing more needed to be added. Presently, however, Henry Gale did say what was obvious to everybody. "Not much mystery, really. The Lords were at PARPO, just like all the other local potentates of Oz."

His words broke the spell of amazement and they talked of how the new realization affected their own plans. "Missed her again," said Wam with chagrin. "We're getting farther apart by the minute. But anyway it's fine to know she's all right. When things get settled a bit we'll go back to the amber castle, ey, Zip? And this time we'll send word we're coming. Maybe then there'll be somebody home!"

"Two down and four to go," said Zippiochoggolak cryptically, but the others understood that he meant that one third of their quests had been achieved: the localizing of the whereabouts of the Lad of Light's two parents.

Another few minutes on and another golden sight delighted their eyes. This was the yellow tin castle of the Emperor of the Winkies on its yellow hill-top. It looked like pure gold—but was not. That glory was claimed by the castle of the Overground Miners in the north of the country, the third in the chain of splendid Winkle castles. But Emperor Nick's residence with its polished battlements and turrets of painted tin rivaled the craggy keep of the Lords of Light in magnificence. Its lower storey was of yellow brick and it was of course as an approach to that castle that the first section of the famous road, of match-

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

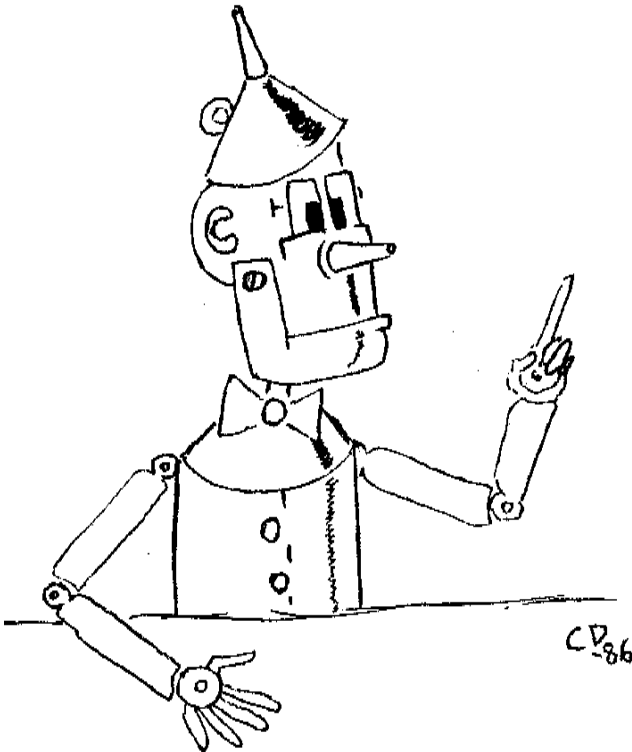
ing materials, was originally laid down.

"I hope we'll be in time!" said Farmer Gale earnestly as the wagon, a flashing red streak, careered through the streets of the yellow village. "If the Lords have left, so maybe have all the other delegates to the conference!"

The fear proved well-founded. As the journeyers drew up to the castle gateway in a cloud of golden dust not a carriage was to be seen in the car-park. "And they wouldn't have *all* traveled here by magic means," said Zip worriedly.

Yet all was not lost. There on the terrace before the ornate entrance to the castle-palace stood the Emperor himself and in his company the Princess Dorothy!

"Dorothy!" yelled her uncle, thrilled to bits, and dropped the reins, stumbled from the wagon, and ran up the steps to fold in his arms his all unsuspecting niece.



"Uncle Henry!" cried the girl. "What a wonderful surprise!" Dorothy was too polite to put any questions about *why* she should have been honored with the treat just at this time. One question, however, flew to her lips involuntarily: "Why, where's Auntie?"

"Oh, Dorothy dear," gulped the old farmer and was once more on the brink of worried tears. The princess stared at him and then slowly went pale.

Hasty introductions and greetings were exchanged. Then the whole party moved inside to the conservatory just off the presence chamber in the East Wing. Refreshments were served and meanwhile Dorothy Gale heard in detail the sad story of the transformation of her aunt.

"This is dreadful!" she cried, aghast. "Yes, it's obvious!: Aunt's come under the influence of the dread Witch of the East. But who would have expected any such thing? I was assured on best authority that the wicked woman was done away with wholly and utterly by the landing of the house on her."

"Don't forget, Dorothy," put in the Tin Woodman: "in Oz the only really effective way of dealing—permanently—with witches is the water treatment. I suppose it was only a question of time until this only provisionally destroyed witch became again a force to be reckoned with."

"What luck then!" exclaimed the girl, finding a ray of sunshine in the general gloom, "that I kept the key in my pockets all these years. Why, little children, if they'd got into the house, might have been hurt by the evil influence of the witch!"

"They might at that," admitted her uncle. "But, Dot, my dear, what do you suggest now? We'd counted so on getting Ozma and them's help here to reverse the enchantment... enchantments, plural, that is." Uncle went on to brief his niece on all the other problems that had cropped up during his and Zip's travels.

Zip! He was staring (in the politest fashion) at Princess Dorothy as if he could never get enough of the sight. So this was the famous maiden who had played so overwhelming a role in

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

the history of Oz. Yet she was just a sweet little girl, perhaps a year or two younger (to look at) than himself. Just think!: if he'd stayed around for thirty seconds longer twelve years before, everything might have been different. By just so short a time had he missed meeting this tin man who now stood before him. Had Zip stayed awake to see the drugged Lion rescued he would have been introduced then to this radiant child. Oh, all the years between that had been lost!

Zip listened with the intensest interest when Dorothy replied to her uncle, saying: "It's simple, dear Uncle Henry: I'm going with you to catch the others up at once. They've only been gone half an hour. We may well overtake them on the road!" Then there was bustle! However, they did not after all want to go off half-cock. Therefore twenty minutes were taken to discuss pros and cons. The also pressing needs and desires of Wammuppirovocuck and of King Vergrodius and his lady love were brought to the fore. Dorothy and Nick Chopper had to confess that they hadn't realized until that moment that they were in the presence of a king.

But what had that king not been feeling! When the Red Wagon drew up at the palace steps Uncle Henry Gale and Dorothy had not been the only ones to be thrilled at a seeing-again. Think what must have been the emotions that stirred the heart of the frog king when he saw again the Tin Woodman for the first time since he had spent the night on his foot so many years before. And then to realize that the young girl who had appeared that morning in the forest and rescued the woodman was in fact none other than the much talked-of niece of good Mr. Gale, in whose company he, Vergrodius, had just spent a week! The sensations of the kinglet were such that he hadn't been able to speak until now — or anyway make himself heard.

When the Emperor of the Winkies had fetched a magnifying glass, introductions were made, and only then, in the silence that was called for, could the infinitesimal croak of the King of the Green Mountain be heard. He was saying, "It's about time! Emperor Nicholas, Your Magnificence, you won't remember me

but I know you! We spent the night together once a long time ago!.. But more of that later! For now...!

The poor little being was screaming himself quite hoarse and still it was only by the most intense concentration that any of his hearers could even approximately make out what he was saying. He broke off, then made one last desperate effort to achieve a cure of at least one of his grave drawbacks:

“Please, oh, please! couldn’t somebody do something about my size?! I realize that my enchantment can’t yet be cast off, but it might at least be possible for me to be made big enough that I could take a reasonable part in the conversation! Please—somebody—do something!!”

“Hmm,” said Emperor Nick. “That’s simple enough. Zip, young man, there’s some increasing pills in the medicine cabinet upstairs. Would you care to fetch them? They’re in a small blue box—next to the reducing ones...”

It was delightfully like old times for them as Wam, the Weird and Wonderful, ‘sent’ his light boy and in an instant the swift messenger had returned with the indicated box. “Sorry, Uncle,” said Zip thoughtfully. “*You* might have sent me—but it was out of sight, and you and I haven’t trained that far yet.”

“I understand, my boy,” said the farmer. He gave a small nostalgic smile to think of their little triumphs of teleporting now already fading into the past.

Princess Dorothy selected a pill and laid it on a polished orangewood table. Zip placed his cap near the pill and in a moment the minuscule frog was seen—by those with good eyesight—to climb down the front of the cap band, leap off the bill, and make his way to the pill, which was perhaps thirty four times as large as himself. The onlookers could only assume that he had begun to lick the capsule; the movement of a tongue was not seen.

And then there came, they thought, a change. Slowly the infinitesimal creature grew to the size of a pea, then more quickly to the dimensions of a golf ball. Now he was seen to be a lovely shade of emerald, with a not displeasing sensitive-looking face

UNCLE HENRY AND AUNT EM IN OZ

reminiscent of Oscar Levant and James Baldwin (though those personages still belonged to the future).

Faster and vaster grew the frog, until the spectators began to grow uneasy. "How long—" said Dorothy, glancing at Nick C. in alarm.

"The pill knows," the Emperor hastened to assure—though how a pill could know anything remained unclear. "When the King is the 'right' size..."

With a final stretch and a creaking bass moan Vergrodius stopped expanding at about the size of a turkey. "Whew!"; there was a sigh of relief all round, not least from the frog king himself. There might be too much of a good thing, even of oneself.

"That's better," he belched with a deep croak and leapt heavily off the table. "Now I have a little weight to throw around."

And proceeded to. For the first next thing on *his* agenda was what to do about the golden statue of his adored one, Nymph Lorna. The others had by now relaxed from their initial air of bustle; there were just too many decisions they must come to before they might go dashing off in pursuit of the departed PARPO delegates.

Uncle Henry too was quite concerned about the matter of the 'statue'. He had observed that the figure, clad in pure soft gold, was already showing signs of flattening and other wear and tear from the bouncing and rolling it was prey to in the back of the Red Wagon. The toe on which one end of the statue rested was bent double, while the gold integument of the elbow had torn through and one could see within the charred drapery and boiled-looking skin of the tortured woman. They all agreed the figure ought not to be subjected to any more such treatment.

The thoughtful Emperor of the Winkies came to the rescue. "Here is an empty pediment," he pointed out and lifted his own elbow from a truncated Ionic column where sometimes an aspidistra stood. "I would be greatly honored if the statue of Lorna, including Lorna herself, might be allowed to beatify my conservatory—just temporarily—until measures can be taken to restore her to her former form."

“But, oh!” burped King Vergridius baritonely: now audible even to Uncle Henry, “to be parted from my beloved! How can I bear it?”

However, he let himself be persuaded when the others assured him that Lorna’s non-presence in the rescue party would not be allowed to delay her restoration by even an hour. Nick Chopper told the distraught frog that he, the Emperor of the Winkies, would keep the golden figure under his personal surveillance. And what a work of art!—well of accident really—the statue was: so expressive of terrified agony; it would be quite the centerpiece of the Winkie ruler’s sculpture collection. As a matter of fact, the adventurers felt it would be a weight removed from their spirits—not to mention from the floorboards of the Red Wagon—not to have to look any longer at so much agonized terror as they rolled along.

And so, with great care and consideration, Lorna the gold wood nymph was erected on the pedestal and Vergridius took a tearful farewell of her.