

The Wishing Horse Of Oz – Oz 29

L. Frank Baum

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CHAPTER 1

THE KING OF SKAMPAVIA

"Is this all?" The King of Skampavia frowned at the great stack of bags, bales, crates and carriers heaped around his throne. Leaning forward, he gingerly extracted a fig from one of the baskets and popped it into his enormous mouth. "Pah, dry as a blotter," spluttered the red-faced ruler, gritting his teeth with disgust, "and look at those cocoanuts, no bigger round than a baby's rattle!" Leaping off his throne, he began kicking at the baskets of vegetables and bales of cotton and other merchandise. "What dusty junk is this?" he raged, glaring furiously at Pinny Penny, his patient Prime Minister. "How dare they send me such stuff?" Clasp and unclasp his hands nervously, Pinny Penny nevertheless spoke up boldly. "Because they have nothing better, your Majesty. What can our poor subjects do with land so unprofitable and barren? Then, not only must they produce enough for their own needs, but are required by the law to give one-third of all they raise to the crown."

"And why not?" blustered Skamperoo, settling back argumentatively on his throne. "I am the KING! You can't get around that, you know."

"No," sighed Pinny Penny, and drawing aside one of the shabby curtains, he looked sorrowfully out into the courtyard.

"What's all that racket?" demanded his Master as a medley of shouts, roars, and dull thuds came rolling up to them. Forgetting his anger for a moment, he bounded to his feet and came across the room to look over Pinny Penny's shoulder.

"A slight argument seems to have arisen among the Supervisors," murmured Pinny Penny resignedly.

Now Skampavia, I must tell you, is roughly divided into seven counties, and over each county Skamperoo had set a Supervisor whose duty it was to govern the province and to turn over to him one-third of all produce and merchandise in that county. To save time and easily identify them, the supervisors were known by the size of the counties they governed. For instance, the Supervisor of the First County, which was one mile wide and ten miles long, was called Onebyten; the Supervisor of the Second County Twobyfour; and the others were variously known as Threebysix, Ninebyfive, Eightby-eight, Fivebynine, and Fourbyseven. Twice a year the Supervisors rode into the capital with their tribute, and now, down in the courtyard, the seven tremendous Skampavians were in a perfect pitched battle, helped out by all the guards and palace servants.

"Argument!" roared the King, slapping Pinny Penny rudely on the shoulder.

"It's a fight, and you know it! Ho, ho! Just look at the good-for-nothing rascals. I tell you, old Two Pins, however poorly they serve us as farmers and merchants, our Skampavians can certainly fight. And who says I'm too hard on them? Have I not given every man Jack a dress uniform and gun and made them learn military drilling and marching at the Royal College?"

"And what use is all this drilling and marching?" inquired Pinny Penny wearily. Letting the curtain fall, he hurried away, for well he knew, if he did not put a stop to the conflict in the courtyard, every window in the palace would be broken.

"Now what did he mean by that?" muttered Skamperoo peevishly as his little

Prime Minister whisked out of sight. Pursing his lips, he seated himself heavily on his throne. After all, Pinny Penny had only spoken the truth. Why had his father or his father's father ever picked out this pesky little country in the first place? Located in the southern part of the desert of Noland, between the Kingdoms of Ix and Merryland, Skampavia, he was forced to admit, had neither riches, beauty, nor interest. His castle, though poor and shabby, was comfortable enough, and having lived in it all his life, he was used to it. He had put up with the hot, dry climate and the poor quality of the food, but after all, why should he continue to do so? In those long-ago days in the schoolroom he had studied of energetic rulers who had taken their armies and gone forth to conquer richer and more desirable lands from their neighbors. Well, then, why should not he take his men, push over the border into a more fertile and kindly land? The idea pleased but at the same time annoyed him. Skamperoo was fat and lazy. He loved quiet and ease, and the thought of a hard military campaign made him shudder with distaste. Still, he reflected, remembering Pinny Penny's reproachful face, a King should do something for his subjects, and the more he did for them Ho, ho! the more he could make them do for him. A rich and prosperous country meant a rich and prosperous ruler.

Discontentedly fingering the rough cloth from which his royal robes were fashioned, he began to picture himself decked out in splendid satins and velvets heavily encrusted with jewels. Jewels. Pah! All the jewels he had were his plain gold scepter, badly dented and bent from hurling at Pinny Penny. Taking off the crown, he scowled at it critically and began considering the realms on either side of his own dominions.

To the north there was nothing but a sandy strip of desert and the tossing

waters of the Nonestic Ocean. East lay the Kingdom of Ix, and Zixie (sic) the little Queen he considered too pleasant and friendly to conquer.

Besides, the climate of Ix was not much better than that of his own country. To the west of Skampavia was Merryland, and at one time a band of his roistering Skampavians had crossed over into that country bent on theft and mischief. Recalling the way they had been welcomed and entertained by the cheerful King of Merryland and sent home simply laden with presents, he hastily dismissed that country too. How could he fight a monarch like that? To the south lay the burning sands of the Deadly Desert, which no man in his own Kingdom had ever succeeded in crossing.

So having exhausted all the possibilities in the immediate neighborhood, Skamperoo tapped his foot in vexation and began casting about in his mind for some fair and faraway country to conquer. He closed his eyes in order to think better and was just on the point of falling into a pleasant doze of riches and conquest when Pinny Penny came noisily into the room. He was preceded by two of the King's Supervisors, who, urged forward by the fearless little Prime Minister, stood sulkily and defiantly before the throne.

"Well, what now?" demanded Skamperoo, blinking his eyes sleepily. "Can you not handle these arguments yourself, Pinny Penny? Is a King to have no rest or privacy at all?"

Instead of answering, Pinny Penny took a small cotton bag from the tallest of the Supervisors and handed it silently to the King. Still half asleep, Skamperoo untied the drawstring of the small bag and emptied the contents into his fat hand. What he saw there made his eyes fly open wide open.

Jewels! The very thing for which he had been wishing. "Emeralds!" gasped the King, rubbing the glittering necklace between his fingers. "Where did you get this, Twobyfour?"

"They were sent to your Majesty by a merchant in the Second County, who got them from a traveling peddler. The peddler had got them from a Gilliken, who had got them from a Quadling, who had got them from a Munchkin, who had once lived in the Emerald City of Oz."

"OZ!" snapped the King, sitting up very straight. "Where is Oz?"

"Oz is a great and powerful Kingdom on the other side of the Deadly Desert," answered Twobyfour, looking uneasily over his shoulder at Pinny Penny.

"Then how did this peddler cross the desert?" demanded Skamperoo, holding the necklace up to the light and feasting his eyes greedily on its gleaming emeralds.

"That I cannot say." Twobyfour cast a longing glance at the door, heartily wishing himself on the other side.

"Then perhaps you will tell us why you did not turn this necklace over to the king," suggested Pinny Penny mournfully.

"Yes, how dared you keep it?" panted Skamperoo indignantly. "And what are you gaping at, Threebysix? I'll wager you were in this, too."

"He was," shouted Twobyfour hoarsely. "He tried to steal the jewels from me. That's how he got the black eye."

"But you tried to steal them from me, and what about that, my fine fellow?" Twobyfour turned a painful and uncomfortable scarlet under the King's accusing eye.

"In Skampavia we have so little, your Majesty," he stuttered miserably.

"With these emeralds I thought I might buy a bit of land in some cooler and

more comfortable country where my wife and boys could be happy a country where flowers would grow in a garden, and where a man would not have to spend his whole life wrestling with rocks and weeds and drilling for hours in the hot sun for no reason whatsoever."

"Hah!" exclaimed Pinny Penny, looking meaningly at the King.

"Hah, yourself!" grunted Skamperoo wrathfully. Then, as the emeralds continued to sparkle and glitter in his hand, his anger subsided. "You did very wrong to keep the necklace, Twobyfour," he stated mildly. "But I have decided to forgive you. Return now to the Second County and explain to the merchant who gave you this necklace that I must have all three."

"All three!" exclaimed Twobyfour. "But he's entitled by law to two of them."

"My word is the law here, and you can choose between a broken law or a broken head," Skamperoo told him calmly.

"He is the KING," murmured Pinny Penny in a quiet voice. There was nothing sarcastic in the manner of his speech, but something in the Prime Minister's expression made the King prickle with discomfort.

"Yes, I am the King," he shouted explosively, "and moreover I have spoken.

Begone, both of you, and YOU, Twobyfour, have two days to return with those two necklaces. The necklaces or your HEAD, do you understand? And er er you may tell that merchant in your county that he need send no more of his wares to the capital; the three necklaces will suffice," he bellowed as the two Supervisors went bolting through the door.

"Now nice, they will suffice. You are the King," sniffed Pinny Penny with a sour smile.

"Are you a parrot or a Prime Minister? Stop repeating that silly stuff and

tell me about Oz," commanded Skamperoo, clasping the emerald necklace around his fat throat. "Have you ever heard of this place, Pinny Penny? It must be a rich and marvelous country if peddlers can trade emerald necklaces as carelessly as we trade wooden beads."

"It is a marvelous country," answered Pinny Penny thoughtfully. "I remember my father telling me about the capital of Oz, an Emerald City where even the streets were inlaid with jewels, and every tower and wall was studded with emeralds."

"Well, why have I never been told about this?" wheezed the King peevishly.

"A country like that just a precious stone's throw away, so to speak."

"Your Majesty has never cared for reading or study," Pinny Penny reminded him a bit maliciously. "In our library there is a whole history of Oz."

"Fetch it! Fetch it, bring it to me at once!" panted the King, bouncing up and down on his throne like a big, bad baby (which in truth he was). "I must discover why Oz is so rich and prosperous while we are so poor and unfortunate."

"Not so unfortunate and poor as we are unwise and greedy," stated Pinny Penny, stalking calmly across the room. "If your Majesty would study ways to improve Skampavia and allow your own subjects to keep a fair share of their crops and merchandise, we might be a powerful country, too."

"Nonsense! What can we do with a rocky little desert like this?" blustered Skamperoo contemptuously. "Skampavia is a dull little Kingdom, a dumb little Kingdom a KingDUMB, that's a good name for it."

"And you?" murmured Pinny Penny under his breath as he hastened away to fetch the book on Oz. Returning, he plumped the fat volume down on the King's knees and stood back with folded arms.

"Well? Well? Do you expect me to read all this?" wailed Skamperoo in dismay.

"Why, it would take a year or more. Explain it to me, Pinny Penny. Just give me the gist of the matter. Jist give me the gist there, I've made a joke. Ha! Ha! Ha! I've made a joke."

"But Oz is no joke," said the Prime Minister shortly. "Your Majesty had better get that through your head at once. Now attend closely, and I will endeavor to give you the most important facts about this rich and enchanting country across the desert. In the first place," Pinny Penny looked severely over his specs, "Oz is about fifty times as large as Skampavia, a great, oblong, undulating country divided into four triangular Kingdoms. Each of these Kingdoms has its own ruler, but all four are subject to the rule of Ozma of Oz, whose capital, the Emerald City, is in the exact center of Oz.

"A girl?" exclaimed Skamperoo, leaning forward excitedly. "How can a mere girl rule over an important country like that?"

"By using her heart as well as her head, by encouraging thrift and rewarding industry," announced Pinny Penny in a tone that made the King wince. "Your Majesty would do well to read of her wise laws and plans for the betterment of her country."

"You may just skip all that," sniffed Skamperoo, closing his mouth stubbornly. "Tell me, who are the rulers of these four Kingdoms and the general customs and characteristics of the people."

Closing his eyes and putting his fingertips together, Pinny Penny began solemnly: "The Northernmost country of Oz is the Land of the Gillikens, famed for its luscious grapes, plums, wisteria, and heather. It is a purple

country and is ruled over by Joe King and Queen Hyacinth, who live in an amethyst-trimmed castle high in the Gilliken Mountains. The Eastern Empire of Oz is a yellow country, known for its wheat, corn, butter, pumpkins, daffodils, and gold mines. Nick Chopper is Emperor of the Winkies, and this singular ruler is entirely made of tin plate and celebrated in song and story as 'The Tin Woodman of Oz.'" Pinny Penny paused a moment to catch his breath and then continued quietly:

"The Southland is red and noted for its strawberries, tomatoes, beets, red birds, red wood, and red heads. Glinda, the Good Sorceress, governs the Quadlings, who make up its inhabitants, and she knows as much magic as Ozma herself"

"Oh, it's one of those magic places where one just snaps the fingers to get what he wants," sighed the King discontentedly. "Well Well, go on"

"The Western Country of Oz is blue," continued Pinny Penny obligingly, "and everyone has heard of its famous Blue Ridge Mountains, its blue birds, its violets, its blue skies, and its capital, the Sapphire City. Cheerio is King and Orin is Queen of the Munchkins, and they live in the Sapphire City in almost as much magnificence as Ozma in the Emerald City. Is that all you wish to know?"

"About the army," muttered Skamperoo, wrinkling up his forehead. "Has this girl ruler a great army stationed at her capital?"

Pinny Penny grinned in spite of himself. "The young fairy ruler of Oz is opposed to all wars and fighting and has at her court an army consisting of one tall soldier with green whiskers," he explained hurriedly.

"One soldier with green whiskers!" shouted the King, nearly tumbling off his

throne. "I never heard anything more ridiculous in my life. I thought you said Oz wasn't a joke, and yet you stand there and tell me about an army with one soldier. Why, that's the funniest thing I ever heard. Ha, haw, haw!"

"Laugh if you wish," said Pinny Penny resignedly, "but don't forget that Ozma has more magic at her fingertips than we have pebbles on our desert. In her palace lives the famous Wizard of Oz, who can work every sort of transformation and enchantment, but does so only for the good of the country."

"Humph!" exclaimed the King. "Well, how many fighting men have we?"

"Seven hundred Skampavian soldiers in each of the seven counties," answered Pinny Penny reluctantly, "but let me warn your Majesty that the idea you have in your head is sheer madness and will lead to nothing but ruin. Take off your crown, put on your nightcap and dream away this foolishness."

"And a fine-looking crown it is," snapped the King, snatching off his crown and looking at it angrily. "But these emeralds will brighten it up a bit, eh Pinny Penny?"

"It is not the sparkle of gems in a King's crown that count, it is the jewels of wisdom in the head under the crown that make him happy and well beloved"

"Stop! Enough!" yelled the King, hurling the crown with all his might at Pinny Penny. "When will you stop this infernal lecturing and scolding?"

"When your Majesty stops talking nonsense," sighed Pinny, catching the crown with one hand and pulling a long bell cord with the other. "Come now, let us have our tea and forget about Oz," he proposed calmly. "Lemon or cream,

your Highness?"

"Lemon!" growled the King sourly, and slapping open the book of history on his knees, he stared long and enviously at a picture of the Emerald City of Oz.

CHAPTER 2

THE KING AND THE MERCHANT

Two days had passed since Skamperoo had come into possession of the emerald necklace. He had never taken it off for a moment. He even wore it to bed, and spent most of the daytime admiring himself and it in the palace mirrors. Now, as the afternoon of the second day drew to a close, he kept bouncing over to the windows that commanded a view of the Highway.

"If that rascal does not turn up soon, I'll I'll"

"Explode, probably," predicted Pinny Penny, who was playing solitaire with the only pack of cards the castle afforded. "Calm yourself, Skamper, what good are these emeralds when you come right down to it?"

"Good? Good? They are worth more than this whole miserable castle," answered the King indignantly. "I can sell them and buy no, no, I'll never part with them," he corrected himself hastily. "They give me a feeling of importance and power. Our star has risen, Pinny Penny. Great days are ahead. Hark! Listen! Is that a footstep in the courtyard?" Darting back to the window, the portly monarch flattened his nose against the pane. "It's Tooby! It's Twobyfour!" he shouted, hopping up and down like a schoolboy. "And there's a tall, bearded stranger with him."

"If your Majesty will quietly seat yourself, I'll endeavor to announce them," reproved Pinny Penny, gathering up his cards. "Remember, you are a

King and not a jumping jack."

"Oh all right." Skamperoo flung himself heavily down among his cushions, and presently the tramp of feet along the corridor proclaimed the arrival of the long-awaited Supervisor. Pinny Penny advanced stiffly to meet him and after a whispered conversation, he called out in a bored voice:

"Twobyfour, Governor of our Second Province, and Matiah the Merchant, your Majesty!"

"Yes! Yes? But where are the emeralds?" panted Skamperoo, leaning forward eagerly as the two travelers advanced respectfully to the throne. Drawing a small bag from his leather jerkin, Twobyfour held it sullenly out to the King.

"Here, your Majesty, and here also is the merchant who goes with the necklace." Twobyfour haughtily indicated the turbaned Skampavian beside him.

"Yes! Yes, the merchant." The King, intent upon the jewels, did not even look up. "He goes with the necklaces, you say? Well, ha! Ha! Now he may go without them. That is all I require of you, my good fellow. Your presence here is not necessary or desirable. You may go. GO, do you understand?"

"Go?" Matiah drew himself up to his fullest height, which was pretty high, I can tell you. "Perhaps your Majesty will suggest where? For these three necklaces I traded my house, my shops, and all my other possessions. You say that is all, and it is indeed. Since you have taken all I own and possess, your Majesty must take me also. You owe me a living, and I am here to say so."

"Say no more," put in Pinny Penny soothingly. "Matiah is right, Skamperoo,

and well within his rights as well. We must make a place for him in the palace. What can you do?" he inquired practically.

"Do?" The merchant opened his eyes very wide. "Do? I am a merchant accustomed to dealing in jewels, china, cloth, and basketwear (sic)."

"Then you'll be the very one to help out in the kitchen and laundry," proposed Pinny Penny brightly. "There are no jewels, but we have onions and potatoes aplenty, and with the dirty dishes and hampers of soiled linens you will be right at home."

"What?" screamed Matiah as Twobyfour snickered behind his hand. "You require this mean-ial toil of me Matiah, son of Metorah, son of Metanic, merchants for these thousands of years? This is preposterous! An outrage! I will go! I will go indeed. I will start a war, an uprising, a revolution! Help! Help! Help!" yelled the merchant shrilly. "The King has stolen my emeralds."

"Stop! Stop! Not so loud," begged Skamperoo, leaping agilely off his throne and pattering anxiously after Matiah. "You may leave us, Pinny Penny, I think I can find something better than kitchen work for this honest citizen."

"Humph!" snorted Pinny Penny, and motioning for Twobyfour to follow him, he marched disapprovingly from the royal presence.

"You musn't mind old Pinny," puffed the King, dropping a bit breathlessly on his throne. "There, there, now, sit down and make yourself comfortable. As I was saying, Pinny Penny has very odd notions at times."

"Very odd," agreed Matiah, and seating himself on a chair opposite the King, he fastened his eyes greedily on the sparkling chains now clasped firmly about the monarch's fat throat.

"Now, then, we must find something easy and pleasant for you," went on the King, scratching one ear reflectively. "You might, er you might spend your time entertaining me. I'll wager you are just full of good stories, songs, and amusing tricks."

"Tricks?" exclaimed the merchant, elevating his nose disdainfully. Then a sudden gleam came into his small, black eyes. "Tricks!" he repeated more pleasantly. "Ah, your Majesty is right. How well you have guessed my secret." Leaning forward, he held his hand up to his mouth, and looking furtively over his shoulder whispered hoarsely, "I am a magician, King, and well versed in the arts of sorcery."

"Sorcery!" cried Skamperoo, clasping himself delightedly about his middle.

"How perfectly panormick! Magic is the very thing we need around here. Tell me quickly, what can you do? How much magic do you know?"

"Is there some place where we can be quite alone?" Matiah held up his hand mysteriously. "NO one must know I am a magician. It must be a secret between us."

"Of course! Of course!" agreed the King, rolling off his throne with more speed than dignity. "Come to my private walled garden. No one can hear us there."

"No one?" asked Matiah sharply. "Are there then no guards upon the wall?"

"No guards, no servants, no one at all is allowed in my garden," the King assured him proudly.

"And is there a door in the garden's wall?" Matiah, stroking his long beard, stood regarding the King thoughtfully. "My first trick requires a door."

"Of course there's a door, or how should I get out and in myself? Come

along, come along!" Waddling into the corridor, Skamperoo started off at a quick trot for his private garden. Matiah, grinning wickedly to himself, stepped softly after the King. Once in the garden, he meant to have his necklaces, even if he had to take off the King's head to get them.

"One sweep of my scimitar," murmured the merchant to himself, "Ho, ho! this is too easy!" The King's garden when they reached it was no more than a small, sandy square with some cactus plants in the center and a rickety bench against the wall. Seating himself heavily on the bench, Skamperoo made room for the merchant beside him.

"Now, then," he grunted hurriedly. "Begin. Show me what you can do. Prove that you are a magician."

"First I must have the necklaces," stated Matiah calmly. "Without the necklaces I cannot do a single trick."

"But but if the magic is in the emeralds, I can be my own magician," answered Skamperoo, clutching the chains with both hands.

"But your Majesty is not a magician," Matiah told him reasonably. "You do not know the proper words or incantations. No, I myself must wear these magic jewels. And what harm is there in that? As soon as your wish is granted, I will hand them straight back to you."

"What's that? Can you really grant wishes?" Skamperoo's eyes began to snap and dance with greed and interest.

"Certainly," promised Matiah, blinking shrewdly across the square and estimating with his eye the distance he should have to run to reach the door in the garden wall. "All you have to do is to think of something you want, close your eyes, count slowly to a hundred, and I, wearing the three necklaces, will easily grant your wish. I thought you trusted me and that

we were going to be friends," he finished reproachfully.

"We were. Er, that is HERE, take them!" Unclasping the heavy chains, Skamperoo, who already had a wish in mind, thrust them into the merchant's hands. Closing his eyes, he made his wish and then began to count hysterically, "One, two, three, four, five, six." At six, Matiah was halfway across the garden, when horrors! A great white horse with a golden tail and mane dropped like a plummet from the sky. Pawing up the sand in Matiah's path, he flashed his yellow eyes so wickedly, the merchant fell back into the cactus bushes, where he lay screaming with shock, pain and amazement. But Skamperoo, thinking all the noises he heard were but magic incantations, went calmly on with his counting. He had reached sixty before Matiah had recovered himself enough to crawl out of the cactus and make his way cautiously back to the bench. The immense white horse continued to stare at him threateningly, but as it made no attempt to spring forward, he began to regain a little of his usual assurance and courage.

"Great Garoo! Then there was magic in the emeralds. This horse was undoubtedly the King's wish come true, a beastly wish!" shuddered the merchant as he stared in fascination at the pawing monster and wondered what to do next. He was afraid to run past the white horse and escape with the jewels, but HAH! he could make a wish for himself, a wish that would carry him and the emeralds far from Skampavia, the farther the better. Closing his eyes, he muttered a hurried sentence and waited tensely to be transported to Ev, a country he had once visited in his youth. But nothing at all happened, and gritting his teeth with vexation, Matiah opened his eyes just as Skamperoo finished counting a hundred.

"So!" beamed the delighted monarch heartily. "You have done it. You really are a magician. Behold my horse, a horse in a thousand. A golden-maned charger fit for a King, for a Conqueror"

"Of all the dumb things," fumed Matiah, wriggling fiercely away from Skamperoo, "of all the dumb things to wish for, a horse is about the dumbest of all!"

"Dumb?" whinnied the white steed with an indignant snort.

"I'm not a dumb beast, I can laugh, I can talk,

That's becoz I'm from Oz, and my full name is Chalk."

"Cha-ik?" quavered Skamperoo, who had never heard an animal speak a word in his life. "He he says his name's Chalk." The King looked appealingly at the merchant, and seeing he would have to live up to the role of magician, Matiah assumed an air of careless superiority.

"Well, he doubtless knows his own name, your Majesty. If he says his name is Chalk, it probably is Chalk, and the reason he can talk is because he comes from Oz, land of the magic necklaces, where all animals speak as well as we do."

"Better," sniffed Chalk. Then, taking a experimental nibble at the cactus, he gave a terrific squeal of pain and displeasure flung up his heels and began to race around the garden at such a furious pace, Matiah and the King jumped behind the bench and covered miserably against the wall.

"Well, there you are!" panted the merchant angrily. "You have your horse, and what now? He's yours, you know, and you'll have to control him." Matiah ducked behind the King as Chalk thundered past, covering them both with dust and sand. "If you ask me, you simply wasted a wish. Why, you might have wished yourself a ton of emeralds, or a Kingdom ten times as large and

prosperous as Skampavia, or"

"But there's plenty of time for that," sputtered Skamperoo, holding desperately to the bench, "since you are a magician, you can grant all of my wishes."

"Oh no, no indeed!" Matiah spoke hastily, remembering the way the emeralds had failed to grant his wish. "I can grant only one wish a week," he explained breathlessly, "and I trust next time you will think before you wish. Whoa, there, you Ozian brute! You silly monster. Stop that! Whoa! Ho! Whoa, I tell you!"

"Are you my master?" Leaping lightly over the cactus, Chalk came to a sudden halt before the bench.

"No, this King is your master," answered Matiah thankfully enough. "Speak to him, Skamper," he urged in a lower voice as Chalk reared curiously up on his hind legs to have a good look at the King.

"Be behave yourself," commanded Skamperoo tearfully. "How do you expect me to ride on your back if you act like this?"

"Ah, so you expect to ride me?" Chalk came down with a thud and grinned broadly at his new master. If you have never seen a horse grin, you have no idea how upsetting it can be. "Well, I suppose I shall have to put up with you," he neighed finally. "Just call a groom or servant, old Rub-atub, and see that I'm served my evening oats, three apples, and a measure of corn."

"Certainly, certainly," agreed the King, starting off on trembling legs.

"Well, I must say this is splendid, splendid!" protested Matiah, hurrying nervously after the King. (He was afraid to stay in the garden with Chalk.)

"Where do you expect to get taking orders from a horse?"

"I suppose you'd prefer me to take them from you!" puffed Skamperoo, beginning to grow a little angry himself. "Here, GIVE me my necklaces."

Snatching the emeralds from the merchant's neck, he went charging into the palace hardly knowing whether to be glad or sorry for the sudden change in his fortunes.

But by the time he reached the throne room, he had calmed down considerably.

Seating himself hurriedly on his throne, he pondered how he could keep all these strange occurrences from Pinny Penny. He felt sure Pinny Penny would never approve of magic necklaces or a talking horse. Well now, he'd just tell his meddlesome Prime Minister that the stamping, snorting steed in the garden belonged to Matiah and must be fed and stabled. When he made another wish and he had a whole week to think about that when he made another wish he would be careful to wish for everything he needed. As for this whiskery wizard, he would flatter him along until he discovered the right magic to use with the emeralds. Then he would wish him away like that. Like THAT! Snapping his fingers spitefully, Skamperoo pulled the long bell cord that summoned Pinny Penny. His Royal Charger should be fed. Not many monarchs had a talking horse with a golden mane. Aho, but he was coming on! He'd show Pinny Penny yet what a smart ruler he was!

Now Matiah, following the King slowly into the palace, had done some reflecting, too. He resolved not to lose his temper again with this provoking simpleton of a sovereign. He would simply humor him along, and before the week was out he would have another chance to steal the necklaces and escape to some far country. There at his leisure he would experiment until he discovered the right way to use them. He could not understand why the King had got his wish and his own wish had gone for nothing. What was

the secret of the magic emeralds? With his forehead still wrinkled in thought, Matiah entered the throne room and quietly seated himself in a chair opposite Skamperoo. Much to his relief, the King neither reproached nor upbraided him.

"As, so there you are!" he cried in his best meant-to-be-cheerful voice. "I have just sent Pinny Penny to feed your horse."

"My horse?" barked Matiah, starting up in dismay. Then, catching a meaning wink from the King, he quickly winked back.

"It seemed wisest," murmured Skamperoo, "to say nothing of your magic powers for the present. All this will be OUR secret," he finished playfully.

"Oh, yes, yes, indubitably!" While Skamperoo was still wondering what "indubitably" meant, Matiah hurried out of the room and took a long drink of water from the old-fashioned fountain in the hall. "OUR secret!" he repeated bitterly to himself. "Our secret, indeed!"

CHAPTER 3

MORE ABOUT THE EMERALDS

Skamperoo had not slept a wink. He tossed from side to side of the royal bed, his head simply buzzing with enchanting plans for the future. With the magic emeralds he could have everything he desired, and his desires and wishes were multiplying so rapidly he scarcely knew where to begin or what to wish for first. The necklaces pressed uncomfortably against his throat, but he would not take them off. He was so weary he ached in every bone, but still he could not stop thinking, and just as the castle clock tolled seven, the very thing he should wish for first came suddenly to him.

Ah, that was it. Too bad he had to wait a whole week, but a week would pass, and perhaps during that time he would discover for himself the magic secret of his sparkling new treasures. Then he could be his own magician and put that meddling merchant in his place. As he was running over in his mind possible places to send Matiah, the door of his room opened cautiously, and Pinny Penny stuck in his head.

"Well! Well? And did I ring?" grunted Skamperoo fretfully. "This is a fine time to awaken an Emperor."

"Emperor?" exclaimed Pinny Penny, coming all the way into the room and closing the door. "Since when has Skampavia's King become an Emperor?"

"Oh, go away and don't bother me." Turning his back on Pinny Penny, the King thumped his pillow and closed his eyes as tightly as he could.

"It's all about the horse," whispered Pinny Penny, coming around to the other side of the bed. "A strange and magnificent animal for a mere merchant, if I may be permitted to say so. Not only that, it TALKS. It's ordering the stable boys around in a shocking manner, and it even told ME to mind my own business."

"Well, why don't you?" suggested Skamperoo, rolling over on his back. "Of course he talks, Pinny; he's an Oz horse, and all animals from Oz talk. I thought you knew that."

"Well, if this merchant has a talking horse, he is not so poor as he pretends," persisted Pinny Penny, shaking his finger under the King's nose.

"My advice is to set the fellow on his horse and send him about his business as quickly as possible. I don't like his looks, Skamper. He's mean and mischievous, and mark my words, no good will come of him or his necklaces."

"I don't like his looks any better than you," agreed the King, clasping his fat hands on his stomach. "But if I keep the emeralds, I must keep the merchant, and besides, I've a notion I could ride that talking horse myself."

"Oh, good goats and gravy! Then I'd best go and lay in a supply of splints and liniment." Pushing his specs up on his forehead, Pinny Penny cast a disgusted glance at his huge reclining master and rushed hurriedly from the royal presence.

Now Matiah, as you can well imagine, had slept no better than the King. In the small room to which Pinny Penny had taken him, he paced restlessly up and down. After all, he knew only two facts about the magic emeralds, the first that they really could, under certain conditions, grant wishes; the second, that they must not be worn by the person making the wish. This much the merchant had reasoned out for himself.

As the King had got his wish while he, Matiah, was wearing the necklaces, and he himself had not got the wish he made with the emeralds around his own throat, that much seemed certain. Snapping his fingers joyfully and feeling sure the King was now wearing the jeweled chains, Matiah made a second wish, counting slowly to a hundred. But the hearty supper he had ordered as a test failed to appear, and flinging himself down on the bed, he began to rack his brains for some other solution to the mystery. Perhaps the magic power rested in a single stone which he had luckily touched as the King made his wish.

Holding his head with both hands, he tried to remember exactly what he had done as Skamperoo began to count. But it was no use. He could not recall a

single thing after he had started to run across the garden. And how, concluded the infuriated fellow, was he ever to discover the way to use the emeralds without arousing the King's suspicions or revealing the fact that he knew no more about them than Skamperoo himself? Muttering with vexation, he kicked a footstool all the way across the room and sat staring morosely at the worn carpet. The short, uneasy nap he finally got before morning did him no good, and cross and jumpy as a cougar, he made his way to the dingy dining hall of the palace.

The King had already breakfasted, and looking out of the window, Matiah saw a terrified servant leading the Talking Horse around the courtyard, Skamperoo following at a safe distance. The sight of the stamping white charger made Matiah shudder anew. What a waste! he reflected bitterly, and if the King grew fond of the saucy monster, it would make his own task even more difficult, for until he succeeded in stealing the necklaces Matiah did not intend to let Skamperoo out of his sight. Gulping down the weak coffee and cold eggs a shabby servant grudgingly placed before him, he hastened outside. "Good morning, your Majesty!" he called out heartily. "And may I have a word with your Royal Highness?"

"What kind of a word?" snickered Chalk, rolling his yellow eyes roguishly round at the merchant. "Give him a word, old Rub-atub, if that's all he wants. The right word for him, I should way, would be `GO!' or `NO!' and then we all could be happy."

"It is about the necklaces," confided Matiah, ignoring the horse utterly and falling uneasily into step with the King. "They must be cleaned every day to keep them in good wishing condition."

"But I was just going for a ride," objected Skamperoo with a little frown.

"Won't this afternoon do?"

"No, NOW is the proper time," answered Matiah impressively, thinking how clever he was to have invented this ruse to get hold of the emeralds. "If your Majesty will just give them to me, I'll polish them up while you are exercising."

"No, no, er That is, I'd better come and help you," Skamperoo spoke quickly. "I can ride this afternoon."

"You think so?" With an exuberant prance, Chalk rose on his hind legs and spun around like a pinwheel. "Well, see you later, old Sos!" And with the terrified stable boy hanging onto his bridle, he went galloping off to the stable.

"If you take my advice, you'll have that creature knocked on the head," said Matiah savagely. "Surely you won't endanger our lives by riding on his back."

"OUR lives!" exclaimed Skamperoo, looking at Matiah in surprise. "You do not have to ride him; in fact, he's really my horse," he stated jealously.

"So long as your Majesty wears the magic necklaces I must go wherever you go and do whatever you do!" explained the merchant loftily.

"How How very awkward!" In spite of himself, Skamperoo groaned as he thought how tiresome it would be with Matiah trailing after him from morning to night. "I should think a magician like yourself could arrange things more sensibly."

"But consider what is at stake," Matiah reminded him earnestly. "Together we can have and do anything we wish. Is that not worth a little inconvenience?"

"Yes, yes, I suppose so. But if we are to do everything together, I think I should know the magic wishing formula as well as you." Skamperoo looked defiantly up at his newest advisor.

"That is impossible." Striding stiffly along, Matiah shook his head. "The incantation once revealed becomes powerless. Only one versed in magic is permitted to use the emeralds. Have you thought at all about your next wish?" he asked, anxious to direct the King's mind into more cheerful channels. "We should plan and consult about it together, you know. But wait until we are in your Majesty's throne room," he added quickly as Skamperoo began to open and shut his mouth like a fish without saying anything.

"While I am cleaning the necklaces, we can talk it over, yes?" Matiah's fingers fairly itched for the sparkling jewels, but restraining a mad impulse to snatch them from the King's throat, he walked along quietly beside Skamperoo talking so calmly and convincingly that he soon had the Skampavian monarch not only willing but anxious to reveal the wish that had kept him awake most of the night.

First assuring himself that they were alone and locking the door so they would not be disturbed, the King seated himself at a small table. Matiah drew up a chair opposite and held out his hand for the necklaces.

Reluctantly, Skamperoo handed them over, keeping a jealous eye on the jewels as the merchant began polishing them with a small square of silk he had taken from his pocket.

As he rubbed the silk over the emeralds, Matiah carefully examined each one for some mark or sign that would give him a clue to their magic power.

Intent as he was upon this task, a few low-spoken words of Skamperoo made him sit suddenly erect and regard the King with new respect and attention.

How in thunderation, thought Matiah wonderingly, has this fat, silly monarch ever managed to hit upon such a magnificent and breathtaking wish, and as Skamperoo explained and elaborated upon his plan and schemes for the future, the merchant's interest grew apace. Quicker and cleverer than the King, he saw not only the possibilities of this splendid wish, but all the difficulties and problems that must be met and disposed of before it could reasonably be granted.

Leaning forward, the emeralds for the moment forgotten, he put his mouth close to Skamperoo's ear. "There are three things that must be done before your wish can be realized." Matiah spoke tensely. "First... second... third..." After each short, whispered direction, Skamperoo nodded to show that he understood.

"Then it will take four wishes to do it," he sighed, resting his elbows heavily on the table. "That will be four weeks, won't it?"

"No, perhaps if we are careful we can work it all into one," answered Matiah thoughtfully, and taking up his bit of silk, he began polishing the emeralds with renewed vigor. The King, watching him, forgot his former dislike and distrust. Matiah's enthusiastic approval of his plans made him feel that perhaps he had misjudged this long-faced, whiskered stranger. Perhaps he would not wish him away, after all. He might prove very useful in the strange and magnificent future that stretched ahead.

Matiah, on his part, had no such kindly intentions toward the King. He merely meant to make Skamperoo's wish his own, and so grand and daring was the prospect that he grew more impatient than ever to discover the way to accomplish it. Holding all three necklaces up to the light, he squinted at

them anxiously. The chains seemed identical in every respect, but no what was this? One had a diamond clasp, while the clasps on the other two were of flattened emeralds. This, then, was the solution. The magic wishing power undoubtedly rested in the diamond clasp. Revealing in no way his satisfaction and elation over this important discovery, Matiah handed the necklaces back to the King.

Somehow, decided the merchant, he must make Skamperoo touch the diamond clasp while he silently repeated the King's wish, but before that he needed a little time to prepare himself for the grand and glorious years that were to be his. As Skamperoo, exhausted by so much thinking early in the morning, waddled wearily over to his throne, Matiah strode to the bookshelves located in an adjoining room.

"While your Majesty rests, I will have a look at this interesting library," he murmured ingratiatingly, "and at the same time store up some useful information for the future." Skamperoo sleepily returned the merchant's broad wink, then, sinking back among his cushions, closed his eyes.

>From his chair in the alcove, Matiah could keep the King in view, and satisfied that Skamperoo was really asleep, he began hurriedly turning over the pages of the large volume Pinny Penny had but that morning returned to the shelves. Soon he became so absorbed that he forgot all about the King. And that was a pity, for had he taken the trouble to look, he would have discovered that the King was no longer there..

CHAPTER 4

THE KING AND HIS TALKING HORSE

Now it is true that the King had closed his eyes as Matiah settled himself

in the alcove to read, but he was very far from asleep. In fact, no more than five minutes had been ticked away by the old-fashioned clock in the corner before Skamperoo straightened up as if suddenly struck by lightning. Casting a cautious look at the quiet merchant, he began to slide rapidly toward the door. Opening it without a sound, he slipped out into the corridor and, closing it just as softly, went puffing away to the quarters of the White Wishing Horse at the back of the courtyard. Though usually unenterprising and dull, we must credit Skamperoo with one brilliant idea. As Chalk had been brought to Skampavia by the magic emeralds, why should he not know the trick of using them? Fairly panting with eagerness and impatience, Skamperoo jerked open the door of the stable and stepped recklessly into Chalk's stall.

"Ah, the little Kingaling!" whinnied Chalk, tossing his mane gaily. For some reason or other, he found his fat master tremendously amusing, and while he had an immediate desire to trample on Matiah and frighten off the stable boys, he felt only an affectionate tolerance for the tubby little ruler of Skampavia. "Have you come for your ride?" he inquired, giving the King a playful poke with his soft nose.

"No, I've come to talk to you," wheezed Skamperoo, seating himself carefully on an overturned water bucket. "Quick, tell me all you know about these magic emeralds." Touching his three necklaces with a trembling forefinger, the King looked imploringly into the face of his new and powerful steed. "Humph!" Chalk shifted a mouthful of hay to his other cheek. "Well, as to that, or rather them, all that I know is nothing. You forget that I only came into existence yesterday afternoon."

"Of course, of course! I was the one who wished you here," explained the King impatiently.

"You wished me here?" mused Chalk, staring meditatively at the comical figure on the water bucket. "Well, I hardly know whether to thank you or to jump on you with all four feet. Even without any experience at all, I can see that this is no place for me."

"You're right," sighed Skamperoo, clasping his knees dejectedly. "It's no place for me, either. That is why I must know about the emeralds. They can satisfy our every wish, and if we just knew how to use them, we could go away together."

"You think you could manage that!" sniffed Chalk, who had his own opinion as to what would happen once the King mounted on his back.

"Yes, together!" insisted Skamperoo. "Try to think," he begged earnestly.

"You say you know nothing, then how did you know you came from Oz and your name and all that?"

"That's right, how did I?" Putting one ear forward and one ear backward, Chalk swallowed his hay with a quick gulp. "There must be a lot of stuff in my head that I practically know nothing about," he reasoned thoughtfully.

"Suppose you tell me exactly what happened, and then I'll tell you what I think of it." So, hunching forward, Skamperoo recounted the whole story of the merchant and the necklaces, how he and Matiah had retired to his private garden, how there, with the merchant wearing the emeralds, his first wish had been granted.

"And a splendid wish it was, too," sighed Skamperoo, looking fondly up at his white horse. "Never forget that you were my first wish, fellow."

"I'm hardly likely to forget myself," snickered Chalk loftily, "but attend

closely, old Crown and Scepter, when I dropped down into that garden, you whiskered merchant was running for the gate as if his life depended on it.

He only stopped because he was afraid to pass me, and from the way he fell into those cactus bushes, I'll wager he was as astonished as you were that the emeralds had granted your wish." Chalk wrinkled his forehead shrewdly.

"I don't believe he knows any more about the necklaces than we do. If he did, he would never have sent you one in the first place, and he would have granted all of his own wishes and been in some splendid other place.

Matiah's a fraud!" finished the King's horse vehemently, "And he means to steal back the emeralds."

"Of course! Of course! Oh! Oh! Why didn't I think of that myself? What shall we do now?" wailed Skamperoo, jumping up so quickly he overturned the bucket, for Chalk's frankly spoken opinion confirmed his own suspicions of the merchant.

"Sit down," advised the white horse not unkindly. "I may not be a magician, but I have a little sense, and horse sense is what your Majesty needs more than anything else." As Skamperoo righted the bucket and meekly sat down again, Chalk closed his eyes, standing silent and motionless for so long the King thought he had fallen into a trance. But just as he began to fidget nervously about on the uncomfortable edge of the bucket, the white horse opened his eyes and, flashing a triumphant smile at Skamperoo, began calling in a loud, lordly voice, "Boy! BOY! BOY!"

While the King regarded him with mingled misgivings and admiration, Chalk snapped out directions to the clumsy little groom who came running in answer to his summons. When his mane and tail had been thoroughly brushed

and he was decked out once more in the splendid saddle and trappings he had worn on his first appearance in Skampavia, he dismissed the groom with a haughty toss of his head.

"Come!" he breathed mysteriously. "Climb up, Skamperoo, and we'll Skamperoodle before that rascally merchant even misses us. Have you decided upon the place we are to go?" he questioned curiously as the King made seven frantic efforts to put his foot in the golden stirrup. "Heh! Heh! Heh! The other foot, Master. How do you ever expect to mount that way? Stand on the bucket, Kingaling, catch hold of the saddle, and pull. It's easy as oats once you get the hang of it."

"Is it?" Lying mournfully on his back where he had fallen after his last effort, Skamperoo gazed mournfully upward, and Chalk himself began to champ, snort and switch his tail with irritation.

"You wished me on yourself and now it looks as if you would have to wish yourself on me," he muttered savagely. "Here, give me those necklaces hang them over my ear, and let's have done with this shameful exhibition."

"You mean, if I wish myself upon your back I will really be there?" panted Skamperoo, bouncing up like a rubber ball. "You mean you have discovered the secret of the emeralds?"

"Certainly!" The white horse regarded him scornfully through half-closed eyes, and the King, all too willing to be convinced, unclasped his three necklaces and, standing on tiptoe, hung them over Chalk's right ear.

"I wish to be upon this creature's back," puffed Skamperoo, his cheeks swelling out with suspense and importance. "One, two, three, four, five, six" and scarcely had he begun to count before he found himself firmly seated in the saddle.

"Now, now, not another word," commanded Chalk sternly. "Before you dare to speak, take those emeralds off my ear." With shaking hands the King did as he was told, his heart pounding so violently it almost kicked a hole in his shirt.

"That's right," directed the white horse more mildly. "Now suppose you tell me where you intend to wish us and what we do after that. Wishes are pretty quick, you know, and it is best to be prepared."

"But but I cannot understand how you make them work," spluttered Skamperoo. "It's wonderful, it's marvelous. Do you understand what this means?"

"Perfectly." Chalk rolled his eyes triumphantly round at his greedy little Master. "My head seems to be full of magic, which is not strange, seeing that I was magically brought into existence, and the trick of the necklaces, once I got to thinking about it, is quite simple. Now I am what I am a horse, and quite satisfied, but you with these emeralds may easily make a jackass of yourself, so you had better tell me what you wish before you wish it. For instance," he went on reprovingly, "if instead of wishing yourself upon my back you had wished yourself a good horseman, how much wiser that would have been. There's a lot more to riding than getting into the saddle, you know. But never mind that now. What was this great big wish you and Matiah were planning together?" Leaning so far forward he almost lost his balance, Skamperoo hurriedly whispered into Chalk's left ear his grand and glorious wish for the future, being careful to add to his own wish the three crafty suggestions made by the clever merchant.

"You are sure this is what you desire?" Chalk looked sharply and a little

sadly at the rotund and royal figure on his back. "You mean to go away and leave your own people without a thought or care? Isn't there anyone here you would like to take along or give a share of your good fortune?" The King shook his head violently.

"I might make a wish for Pinny Penny," he added rather sheepishly.

"Good idea," sniffed Chalk. "What are you going to give old Skinny Pins? You know, I rather like that old codger." Without delay and a bit spitefully, the King told him, and as this time Chalk found no fault with the wish, Skamperoo again placed the emeralds over Chalk's ear and quickly spoke nine words. Then, without waiting to see whether Pinny Penny got his wish, Chalk again took command.

"If you do exactly as I say, we'll get off before Matiah discovers you are gone and comes down here to slice off your head to get his necklaces," said the white horse severely. Lowering his voice to a whisper, he slowly enunciated four brief sentences. Tingling partly with fright and partly with anticipation, Skamperoo repeated the four sentences after Chalk and began his counting. But stars! Scarcely had he reached ten before he felt a great lift and lurch, had just time to snatch back his emeralds and seize the reins before he and the huge white wishing horse, without leaving even a rustle in the quiet air, had gone, vanished and completely disappeared from Skampavia.

CHAPTER 5

A GREAT CELEBRATION IN OZ

"Why all the crown jewels, old Toz?" Resting his chin on the window ledge, Highboy looked inquiringly into the dressing room of Joe King, ruler of the

Gillikens and all of the purple countries of Oz. The King's apartment was on the tenth floor of the royal palace, but this made no difference to Highboy, for Highboy was a giant horse whose telescope legs could be raised or lowered to any level, making him one of the most amazing and amusing animals in Oz. "I say, are we going anywhere in particular?" he drawled curiously as the King, decked out in his best braided traveling coat and amethyst crown, surveyed himself cheerfully in the long mirror.

"WE!" chuckled the merry monarch, turning round with a hearty roar. "Ho, Ho, HO! And how do you know YOU are going?"

"Well, I see you are wearing your best purple boots, and when the King of all the Gillikens wears his best purple boots, he usually rides his best purple horse, does he not?"

"Right," admitted the King good naturedly, "and I might as well tell you at once that we are going to the capital at the express invitation of her Imperial Highness, Queen Ozma of Oz!" The King cleared his throat importantly. "There is to be an immense festival to celebrate the discovery of Oz by mortals, the honors to be equally divided between the famous Wizard who arrived here in a balloon from Omaha many years ago and little Dorothy, who came by way of a Kansas cyclone somewhat later. Not only will the rulers of all four Oz Kingdoms be present, but many other important and Royal personages as well."

"Well? Well, indeed!" trumpeted the giant horse shrilly. "There you stand all shined up like a doorknob and never a word to me. How'll I look? Why wasn't I told before? When do we start?"

"Just as soon as her Majesty decides what to wear and what to take with

her," answered the King with a solemn wink.

"Oh, then I'll have bushels of time." Highboy sighed heavily with relief.

"So we're invited to the Emerald City, eh? How perfectly perf, how simply magnif. Billy! Tommy! JIM!" As he called the name of each little groom,

Highboy let himself down a couple of stories, and by the time he reached a usual horse height and level on the ground, he had ordered himself a bath,

a mane wave, an oil shampoo and a hooficure. Indeed, Highboy's plans for the party went on apace and with the three grooms pattering after him with

buckets, brushes and sponges, he trotted anxiously up and down his great, airy stable picking out his most splendid saddle and bridle and

silver-braided blanket for the journey. The giant horse wished to make an

impression that would uphold if not enhance the honor and reputation of the

Gillikens. He was eager to renew his friendship with Trot, a little mortal

girl who lived in the palace and with Herby, the Medicine Man, and the many

other interesting characters he had met on a former visit to the capital.

In the Munchkin, Quadling, and Winkie Kingdoms there was also a lively

bustle and stir of preparation, and in many of the lesser Kingdoms the

Kings, Queens and Potentates made ready for the great spring festival in

the Emerald City. And you can imagine the fun and excitement in the capital

itself. Everyone had some special part in the program; even the dogs and

cats ran importantly about on countless errands like small messengers,

their ears and tails quivering with interest and expectancy. After the

visitors had been officially welcomed at the gates of the city, there was

to be an imperial procession with bands, floats and favors for everybody.

Then there were to be games, races, and other exciting athletic events and

a grand banquet in the Royal Palace. A magic-lantern ball in Ozma's garden

would complete the festivities for the first day. For the second, pageants and tableaux depicting the important and historical events of Ozian history had been arranged for the morning. Notta Bit More, a circus clown who had come to Oz from Philadelphia, was putting on an outdoor circus in the afternoon, helped by Bob Up, the orphan who had come with him, and all the famous animals in the Emerald City. From the squeals, shouts, and hilarious chuckles issuing from the huge white tent set just beyond the city wall, it promised to be an unqualified success.

After the circus, Ozma had planned a picnic supper on the banks of the Winkie River, to be followed by demonstrations in magic by the Wizard of Oz and Glinda, the Good Sorceress of the South, and last, but not least, a lavish display of fireworks sent especially for the grand occasion by Happy Toko, Emperor of the Silver Isles. No wonder the children in the Emerald City could think of nothing but the coming celebration. No wonder Dorothy, Trot, and Bettsy (sic) Bobbin, the little mortals who lived in the great palace and were Princesses in their own right, were too busy to think of their titles or bother with their crowns. Dorothy, the first of the three to reach the capital, was Ozma's favorite companion, and Dorothy was perhaps the busiest of all. Not only had she planned all the tableaux and pageants, but had entire charge of decorating the palace and the Emerald City as well. The Scarecrow, whom Dorothy had discovered on her earliest trip to Oz, was her most willing and tireless assistant. This lively straw-stuffed gentleman had brains given him by the Wizard and was in high favor and constant demand because of his natural cheerfulness and amiable disposition.

At the moment, he and Dorothy were superintending the erection of a floral arch over the great jeweled gates of the City. This arch, grown and tended by the Wizard, was so magically compounded that as each visitor rode through the gateway, a ribbon-tied bouquet of fragrant spring flowers dropped lightly into his or her lap. Dorothy and the Scarecrow had tried it out to their complete delight and satisfaction, and now, clasping their large bouquets, watched three energetic little gardeners tie up the last tendrils of the magic vine to the gaily painted arbor.

"You know," said Dorothy, peering over the flower tops at the Scarecrow, "I can hardly wait till tomorrow. To think we'll be seeing Sir Hokus and Ojo and Unk Nunkie and Urtha and Prince Tatters and all the others"

"And they'll be seeing us, too, remember that," beamed the Scarecrow, closing one cotton eye. "And now, if you can manage for a few minutes without me, I had better go and study up on my speech of welcome."

"Oh, are YOU making the speech of welcome? How grand! How thrilling!"

Dorothy gazed admiringly up at her oldest friend in Oz.

"Yes, and I'm also making the speech awarding medals to the Discoverers of our country," confided the Scarecrow, thrusting out his chin and striking an attitude. "How will you feel when I pin that medal on your chest, my girl?"

"Well," sighed Dorothy, looking dreamily over her bouquet, "I couldn't feel any happier than I do now, but it certainly will be a great honor, Scarecrow."

"A great honor! Well, I should snickerty wicker. But what if I forget my speech right in the middle of a word?" The Scarecrow pushed back his old blue hat and puckered up his forehead anxiously. "How will I feel with all

those Kings and Queens staring right at me? Really, I think Ozma had better have someone else make the speeches."

"Oh, go along with you," laughed Dorothy, giving him a little push. "Haven't you magic brains? You'll be a splendid speechmaker."

"Do you think so? Well, I'll do my best." Somewhat reassured, the Scarecrow patted Dorothy on the shoulder and started off through the park. Dorothy could tell from the way he flung his arms about that he was rehearsing, and with an amused little smile she hurried back to the palace to put the finishing touches to the decorations for Ozma's throne room. Halfway there, she met the Hungry Tiger carrying a large basket in his teeth and followed by ten little kitchen boys, also bearing enormous baskets.

"Good gracious, Tige, what's this?" Dorothy stared at the little procession in surprise. The Hungry Tiger and Cowardly Lion have lived in the Emerald City almost as long as Dorothy, and though the tiger's appetite is tremendous and he is always threatening to eat a fat baby, he has never yet done it and is tame as Dorothy's pet kitten Eureka.

"Oh, hadn't you heard?" The Hungry Tiger set down his basket and smoothed back his whiskers complacently. "I'm the head of the reception committee for all visiting animals and am on my way now to buy refreshments for the great banquet and picnic. And trust me," he gave Dorothy a broad wink, "to do it right. Just let me see that list, Kapo." Taking a long slip from the first Kitchen boy, he began to drone off the names of the capital's famous four-footed citizens and then the list of visitors.

"Of course there must be meat for the Cowardly Lion and myself," mused the Tiger, blinking his eyes sleepily. "Then there's Hank, Bettsy Bobbin's

Mule, and Doubty, that dromedary you and Sir Hokus brought back from one of those strange journeys, and we musn't forget Peter's Iffin, though he doesn't eat much. Put down a box of violets and geraniums for the Iffin, Kapo, my lad. Ozma's Saw Horse and the Woozy, being of wood, don't care for food, but that fine pink pig Pigasus eats enough for a dozen horses, and Toto, your little dog, and Billina must be taken care of, too, and Scraps' bear Grumpy."

"Of course," agreed Dorothy, leaning her elbow on the Tiger's back so she could read the list over his shoulder. "But they all live here. Who's coming from foreign parts, Tiger?"

"Well," confided the Tiger, "you'll be glad to know our old friend the Comfortable Camel is making the trip with Hokus I mean the Yellow Knight and Marygolden, the Princess he married, is riding a warhorse named Stampedro. The King and Queen of the Gillikens will make the trip on the Giant Horse (quite a lot of horses, aren't there?), and I hope Highboy keeps his legs in bounds. It makes me nervous to see a creature one height one minute and another height the next. You knew the Prince of Pumperdink was bringing Kabumpo, the Elegant Elephant?"

"Don't you mean that Kabumpo is bringing him?" put in Dorothy mischievously.

"And won't you be glad to see him again?"

"Yes, I'll be glad enough to see him," murmured the Tiger, "but feeding him is quite a big problem."

"Well, you're just the one to do it," said Dorothy, smoothing away the wrinkle between the Tiger's pointed ears. "You have such a big appetite yourself, you'd know just how hungry an elephant would feel. I see you've got Roger down, too."

"I'm pretty sure King Ato will bring his Read Bird, so I'm ordering a dozen boxes of animal crackers for Roger and a barrel of apples for Snufferbux."

"I wonder if he'll dance for us." Dorothy's eyes brightened, for she had taken a great fancy to the faithful bear with whom Ojo had traveled all over Oz. "He's bound to be jolly and full of fun."

"And hungry as a bear," sighed the Tiger with a worried frown. "But that is easy compared to a dragon. King Cheerioled is bringing a dragon, and this dragon's on a diet of mustard and sulphur think of that, my child and SAY, I'd best get along, or I'll never get my marketing done."

"And I must go, too," said Dorothy, reminded of her many responsibilities. So, giving the Tiger's ear an affectionate pull, she ran all the way back to the palace. In the throne room she found Ozma and Tik Tok in a quiet conference.

"I've made Tik Tok Master of Ceremonies," said Ozma, looking up with a smile of welcome, "because he never forgets what he's wound up to remember."

"And I'll be sure to keep him wound up," promised Dorothy, patting the machine man on his copper shoulder. Tik Tok was another of Dorothy's discoveries and had been manufactured by a magician to be a slave of the King of Ev, but here he was, thanks to Dorothy, enjoying a life of interest and ease in the capital. Tik Tok could talk, think, and move about as well as anyone when he was wound, and was much more reliable and tireless than a real person.

"I am to announce the visitors as they enter the palace and personally conduct them to their royal quarters," Tik Tok told Dorothy in his slow and precise manner. "Ozma can depend on me

ab-so-lute-ly, and ev-e-ry-thing will go like clock-work." With two stiff bows and ticking with importance, the metal man marched proudly from the room.

"Like clockwork. Ha, ha! Did you hear that, and why not, with a clockwork man in charge? Oh, Ozma, doesn't it all look grand and gorgeous?" Claspng the little Queen around her slender waist, Dorothy gazed around the beautiful throne room. Every window and doorway was garlanded with flowers, while hundreds of palms, ferns, and fluttering silk pennants gave it an unwonted look of pomp and ceremony. "Let me see," mused Dorothy, straightening the folds of a white satin curtain. "I'm to stand on your right, Bettsy Bobbin and Trot on your left, and the Patchwork Girl is to hold your train at the grand reception. Do you think you can trust her, Ozma? She'll probably try to jump rope or wave it like a handkerchief."

"Oh, Scraps is pretty good, considering her giddy make-up," observed Ozma with a little smile, "and she would be so disappointed not to be with us.

I'm sure I can trust her at least for a little while."

"Trust me? Trust me? You disgust me," shouted a merry voice, and Scraps, who had been peeking through the curtains at the back of the room, took a long, running slide, landing in an unladylike heap at the foot of the dais leading to the throne. Scraps, made from an old crazy quilt and stuffed with cotton, had been brought to life by a magician to serve his wife, but the Patch Work Girl had come to the Emerald City with Ojo and never returned to her creators, scorning the humble career of a maid servant. She was so gay and amusing, Ozma had allowed her to remain at the palace.

"Must I go in training to hold a train?" she demanded, springing to her feet and striking so comical an attitude both Dorothy and Ozma had to laugh.

"Of course not," said Ozma kindly, "just be careful and do not do any gymnastics during the reception."

"Oh, I'll be careful and so dignified I'll probably split a seam, but wait till you see the grand-aerial-balance-defying stunt I'm to put on for the big show," puffed Scraps, snapping her button eyes boastfully. "I'm to walk the tightrope in Notta's circus, so SO long, girls, I must go and practice."

"Well, even if she falls, it won't matter," remarked Dorothy with a slight shudder as the Patch Work Girl jumped recklessly out of the window and picking herself up set off for the circus grounds on the edge of the park.

"Oh, Ozma, with all the interesting people here already and with all the grand and exciting ones who are coming, I believe we'll have the best time we've ever had since Oz was discovered."

"Are you glad you discovered us?" Giving her an affectionate squeeze, Ozma linked her arm through Dorothy's. "Let's see how the Wizard is getting on with his tricks for the picnic."

Dorothy nodded eagerly, and hand in hand the two girls hurried across the corridor to the laboratory of the wonderful Wizard of Oz.

CHAPTER 6

A STRANGE WARNING

The first day of the grand celebration dawned clear and bright. The Emerald City had never seemed more sparkling or fair. Flags fluttered from every tower and turret of the palace; each house wore a garland of flowers and flaunted a dozen silken banners in the fresh spring breeze. The streets

were alive with Ozma's subjects suitable costumed for the big parade, and when, shortly after noon, the Royal Visitors began to arrive, the castle bells broke into a joyous tolling, the hundred bands struck up the Oz National Anthem, and the magnificent and beautiful floats began to swing into line.

The Scarecrow's address of welcome at the City Gates had been greeted with wild enthusiasm and applause, and now, happy but somewhat breathless, the indefatigable Straw Man mounted on the Saw Horse was leading the illustrious Guests into the City, where they were to join the Royal Procession and proceed in triumph to the West Gardens of the park. What shouts and cheers went up from the happy throngs as that impressive company in their glittering coaches or riding their favorite steeds moved majestically through the emerald-studded streets of the capital. Directly following the Scarecrow, all in red and wearing her tallest ruby crown, was Glinda the Good Sorceress of the South, her swan-drawn chariot seeming to float by itself. Marching cheerfully after the Ruler of the Quadlings came Nick Chopper, the Nickel-Plated Emperor of the Winkies, polished to the highest degree but democratically afoot, marching in the center of his ten splendid uniformed Winkie Guards. A few steps behind the Tin Woodman and prancing along in hardly restrained exuberance was the Giant Horse, proudly bearing Joe King and Queen Hyacinth, King and Queen of the Gillikens. And Highboy not only carried his own head high, but he had elevated his sovereigns above everyone else in the procession so that none could miss the happily smiling rulers of the North.

A dazzling blue dragon had pulled the coach of King Cheerio, Queen Orin and Prince Philador all the way from Sapphire City, and an eye-filling

sight was the Royal Family of the Munchkins. Kabumpo, the Elegant Elephant, resplendent in his jeweled robe, swayed haughtily along after Cheeriobed's blue coach, waving his trunk in a dignified way to his friends in the crowd. In the canopied seat on his back rode Prince Pompadore and Peg Amy of Pumperdink, easily the handsomest young couple in Oz.

Peering mischievously out the side of his gaily painted jinrickisha was the merry Red Jinn himself, and no one could view the rotund little Wizard of Ev without feeling happier. Jinnicky's body was a great red jar. He wore the lid for a hat, and when he grew bored or sleepy he would simply retire into himself like a turtle. But now he did not feel at all like retiring and was showering ginger cookies right and left and simply beaming with interest and jollity. The King and Queen of Ragbad rolled briskly along in their shabby but comfortable open coach. With them were Prince Tatters, Urtha, his flowery little Princess, and Grandpa, an old Soldier with a wooden leg, who had gone through many wars and hardships for the sake of his country.

But the shout that greeted the Yellow Knight was loudest and longest of all.

The Prince of Corumbia had lived in the Emerald City for many years as Sir Hokus of Pokes before he was disenchanting and became the young and charming husband of Princess Marygolden of Corabia. Sir Hokus rode the Comfortable Camel, and Camy, who had also spent part of his life in the capital, came in for his full share of the cheering. Princess Marygolden was mounted on Stampedro, the Knight's great, stamping warhorse, and Stampedro was a sight to make any little boy's heart beat faster.

Ato, King of the Octagon Isles, and Samuel Salt, a reformed Pirate now Royal

Discoverer and Explorer for the Crown, traveled together in Ato's Octagon (sic) Chariot drawn by eight prancing black horses with eight footmen in eight-sided hats on the high seat behind his merry little Majesty. Roger, the Read Bird, perched proudly on the King's shoulder, reading out the signs and street names as they bowled merrily over the gold paving stones, and chuckling to himself in eight different languages.

Last, but by no means least, came the King and Queen of Seebania, the King's uncle better known in the Emerald City as Unc Nunkie and the King's son, Ojo. The King and Queen were seated sedately in the Silver Coach of Seebania, but Ojo and his pet bear Snufferbux were proudly mounted on the back of Roganda, Queen of the Unicorns. This handsome, snow-white beast, who had happened to be visiting Ojo at the time, could not only send her horn darting out like a lance, but could blow it as well. The sound of its clear, bell-like notes made many a trumpeter in Ozma's band turn round with surprise and envy. Drawn up to meet her impressive visitors was Ozma herself. The Royal Float of Her Imperial Highness was formed like a seashell. On an uncut emerald in the center sat the little Ruler of all the Ozians dressed in a shimmering white robe, wearing her flashing emerald crown, and never in all the thousand years of her young life had this lovely young fairy looked more beautiful. Also in white were her attendants, Dorothy, Betsy, and Trot, each wearing an emerald circlet and carrying a long wand draped with spring flowers.

As the Scarecrow brought his bright cavalcade to a triumphant halt, Ozma's float, drawn by the Hungry Tiger and the Cowardly Lion, swung into place at the head of the line. The other Emerald City Floats, first waiting for the Royal Equipages and mounts of the visitors to pass, swept after them in a

burst of music and color. The Wizard of Oz had chosen a huge, revolving, green ball on which the nimble little necromancer ably kept his balance as he propelled himself along. After him came Jack Pumpkinhead, riding the Iffin. Herby, the Medicine Man, clinging precariously to the Doubtful Dromedary's hump, the pills and boxes in his medicine chest rattling like castanets, was another figure of interest. The float of Notta Bit More represented a circus ring, and the antics of the clown, Pigasus, Bob Up, Scraps, Hank and Grumpy, the Patch Work Girl's bear, kept the onlookers in a gale of hilarity.

Tik Tok had rigged up a mechanical handcar, which he operated himself. Benny, the live statue of a public Benefactor, who had come to Oz from Boston, strode solidly along, an expression of pride and deep satisfaction on his well-carved features. Beside Benny marched the Soldier with Green Whiskers, looking neither to the left nor right, as became a man who represented in his own person the whole and entire army of Oz. I have only mentioned the most outstanding of the Emerald City paraders. Besides these, there were countless marchers and hundreds of miniature castles, ships, huge make-believe sea serpents and dragons, and in a blaze of color and harmony they wound through the streets of the capital, ending up in the West Gardens of the palace, where the boys and girls from Professor Wogglebug's Athletic College distinguished themselves in a series of gymnastic displays, and the Scarecrow established an all-time record for pole vaulting.

By the time Ozma had awarded the cups and trophies, the sun had begun to slip down behind the treetops, and in high spirits and with splendid

appetites the Royal Party and the Royal Guests turned toward the castle.

Here Tik Tok, who had hurried on ahead, nobly discharged his duties as

Master of Ceremonies. The Cowardly Lion did the honors for the Four-Footed

visitors, leading each to an airy, shower-equipped stall in the Royal

Stable so they could rest and refresh themselves before the Grand Banquet.

And how shall I do justice to that dazzling affair?

For the first time in its history the magnificent Dining Hall was filled to

capacity. Easily as large as a city park, there was just room for the two

long, sparkling, flower-laden banquet tables, the first for Ozma's

courtiers and guests, the second for the palace pets and visiting animals.

The Scarecrow caused a roar of hilarity as the diners took their places by

donning a pair of dark spectacles to prevent eyestrain from the flashing of

so many jewels and crowns. With each course of the long, delicious dinner,

Ozma had a different King, Queen or Celebrity at her side, and so cleverly

had it all been arranged, each guest had the honor of sitting for a time

beside the Kingdom's Little Fairy Ruler. Soft music floated down from the

balcony where the Royal orchestra was concealed behind a bower of palms.

The bright robes and jewels of the banqueters and the emerald and silver

dinner service twinkled and sparkled in the magic glow of a thousand

candles. The hundred footmen were swift and skillful, the speeches were

short and merry, "And never," thought Dorothy, looking around with a little

thrill of satisfaction, "never has there been so grand and yet delightful a

party!"

The Hungry Tiger had remembered the tastes and appetites of each of his

guests, and not only were they served with the same dainties enjoyed by the

Two-Footed visitors, but every one had a special dish of his own. Even the

Dragon seemed to enjoy immensely his matches and mustard, then called in a hoarse voice for three pails of hot coals, after which he blew a whole series of smoke rings and went comfortably to sleep.

Dorothy and the Wizard had with due modesty accepted their medals for their discovery of Oz, and the whole company on its feet for this impressive ceremony were suddenly startled by a shrill scream from the Patch Work Girl. "His beard! His beard! Look at his beard!" yodeled Scraps. (Yes, I think "yodel" best describes the excited noise made by this irrepressible maiden.) "His beard, I said, it's turning RED!" At the word "beard," every eye turned to the Soldier with Green Whiskers, for his beard was the longest and most celebrated in Oz.

"Why, so it is!" exclaimed Dorothy in astonishment.

"Red?" choked the Soldier, desperately clutching his famous whiskers. "Oh! Oh! My beautiful green beard, it's red as fire. Oh! Oh! How can I ever be the Soldier with Green Whiskers if my beard stays red? Who did this? Wizard! Wizard, are you playing a trick on me?"

"Certainly not, Soldier. I'd be the last person to tamper with your sacred beard. Quiet, please! Quiet! This is extremely odd and disturbing." Jumping on his chair, the Little Wizard of Oz looked anxiously around the room.

"Do they hurt? Are red whiskers painful?" asked Scraps while the Royal guests, hardly knowing whether to laugh or sympathize, gazed curiously at the blazing beard of the Army of Oz.

"They they hurt my feelings," blubbered the poor Soldier, holding out his bristling red whiskers in disgust. "I'll never get used to a red beard. Never! Never!"

"Why not cut it off?" inquired Prince Pompadore with some difficulty controlling his chuckles.

"What? Cut off my beautiful whiskers? Why, why, I'd rather lose my head," moaned the Soldier with a horrified shudder. "How would I look? How would I fight? Oh! Oh! This is ridiculous!" Burying his face in his napkin, Ozma's distracted army rushed violently from the room.

"Red-iculous, if you ask me," observed the Scarecrow in his droll voice.

"No, no, it's MAGIC!" muttered the Wizard, stepping briskly down from his chair. "Wait, I must consult my book of red magic and portents."

"And I'll go with you," offered Jinnicky, rolling quickly out of his cushioned seat. "You know RED magic is my specialty." So, arm in arm, the Wizard of Oz and the Wizard of Ev bustled away together.

"Well, I can tell you what it means without consulting any books," said the Scarecrow as Ozma, looking rather troubled, again took her place and motioned for the others to do the same. "It is a warning," declared the Scarecrow, raising his arm stiffly. "Someone is coming to beard us in our den (pardon such an informal reference to your castle, my dear)." He made an apologetic little bow to Ozma and then continued seriously, "A danger from without threatens the Kingdom of Oz."

"Who would dare threaten the sovereignty of our country?" demanded the Yellow Knight, brandishing his sword.

"What's up? What's up?" neighed Highboy, elevating himself so suddenly he cracked his head against the ceiling.

"You should know, being so high," chuckled the Scarecrow, who could not resist a joke even when he was most serious. "But calm yourself, my good

horse, you are not in danger yet." Danger! The short, ugly word dropped like a bomb into that gay and carefree assemblage. Dorothy, with a little pang of dismay, saw the Cowardly Lion creeping under the table, and feeling in her pocket for her handkerchief, drew out instead one of the Wizard's wishing pills. He had given it to her so she could visit the corn-ear palace of the Scarecrow the following week and do it by simply wishing herself there instead of making the journey. Dorothy fingered the pill thoughtfully for a minute or two, then with a sudden quick motion popped the small tablet into her mouth.

"Whatever happens, help me to save Ozma and Oz," murmured Dorothy, and swallowing the pill, she looked sharply around the room for further signs of warning or disaster.

CHAPTER 7

WHAT WIZARD?

At first, everything seemed as usual. Then, turning to ask the Tin Woodman a question, Dorothy was annoyed to discover that his chair was pushed back and he was nowhere in sight.

"Oh, he's probably helping the Wizard," decided Dorothy, and had no sooner come to this comforting conclusion before she gave a second start of alarm.

Glinda, the Good Sorceress, was no longer in her seat at the foot of the table, and running her eye hurriedly down the glittering board, Dorothy saw five more empty places. Pressing a finger to her forehead, Dorothy tried to remember who had been sitting in the five deserted chairs. Surely Joe King and Queen Hyacinth had been there between Bettsy Bobbin and Trot, while

Prince Philador, Queen Orin and King Cheerio bed had been directly opposite.

"Good Gillikens!" gasped the little girl, jumping quickly to her feet. "The rulers of all four Oz countries are gone, and Highboy's gone, too." And strangely enough, nobody seemed to have missed them. Instead, they were listening with broad smiles and appreciatively tapping toes to the loud and hilarious singing of the Patch Work Girl. Scraps, thinking it a shame to let a mere change of whiskers spoil a good party, was enlivening the company with her newest and most comical rhymes. So loud was her voice and the applause of the banqueters, Dorothy found it impossible to make herself heard, so running around to the back of the Scarecrow's chair, she tugged him anxiously by the arm. "Scarecrow! Scarecrow!" whispered Dorothy hoarsely. "Where are the Four Rulers of Oz, and whatever can be keeping the Wizard so long?" Tearing his gaze reluctantly from the Patch Work Girl, the Scarecrow looked dreamily over his shoulder.

"WHAT WIZARD?" he inquired blankly.

"THE Wizard, OUR Wizard, the wonderful Wizard of Oz." Dorothy stamped her foot and almost shouted with surprise and vexation.

"Never heard of him," declared the Scarecrow, smiling blandly down at her.

"Now, why not sit quietly down and listen to Scraps? She's never been funnier. Ha! Ha! Ha! Never funnier!" Dorothy was so stunned and dumbfounded by the Scarecrow's statement about the Wizard, she opened and closed her mouth several times without saying anything.

"Mercy, I'd better tell Ozma about this," she thought distractedly, and swinging round abruptly, she scurried along back of the diners till she came to the head of the table. "Oh, Ozma!" panted the little girl breathlessly then stopped short. There was no one in Ozma's great

dragon-armed chair of state. The Yellow Knight and Prince Pompadore, who for the last course were in the seats of honor beside the little Queen, leaned unconcernedly across her empty place engaged in a long, earnest argument about horses. They looked up in surprise as Dorothy, her crown by this time very much on the side, bounced suddenly between them. "Where's Ozma?" demanded the little girl, thumping her fist sharply on the table.

"Ozma?" The Yellow Knight and Prince Pompa exchanged an uneasy glance. "Who is Ozma?" asked Prince Pompadore curiously.

"Oh! Oh, I think you are all perfectly horrid. Stop joking! Stop teasing me!" cried Dorothy, and as both Princes in frank amazement jumped up to try to comfort her, she rushed angrily from the room. As she fled along the green corridor she could still hear Scraps singing and the shouts and cheers of her listeners. "This is terrible, terrible!" wailed Dorothy, and running blindly down the long hall, she burst through the swinging doors of the Wizard's laboratory. What she had expected to find, Dorothy hardly knew. Really, she was hoping to see Ozma and the four other rulers grouped around the Wizard's green table.

But only a blank, suffocating silence answered her frantic calls for the Wizard. Frightened into silence herself, Dorothy tiptoed from one end of the other of the long, curiously appointed apartment, peering into cupboards, under sofas and back of screens. Where was the Red Jinn? Where was the Little Wizard of Oz? Not here, certainly. Not in the Banquet Hall. But the THRONE ROOM! THERE she would find all of her missing friends conferring with Ozma over the threatened danger to the realm. With a little gasp of relief, she darted across the corridor into the vast and

magnificent Hall of Justice where Ozma received visitors, settled disputes, and carried on all the important business of governing.

They were not in the sumptuous presence chamber, but at least the throne was not empty. No, no indeed! Dorothy looked once, rubbed her eyes, looked again, and then, giving a shrill scream of terror, flung both arms round one of the emerald-studded pillars. An immense white horse was sitting on the throne of Oz. A great, fat King was sitting on the horse, or rather clinging desperately to his neck. Dorothy knew he was a King by the crown perched ridiculously on the side of his head. That crown seemed oddly familiar, and after another horrified glance, Dorothy screamed again, for it was the splendid emerald circlet belonging to Ozma of Oz.

Her screams seemed to rouse the two occupants of the throne, who, to be perfectly frank, looked as dazed and stupefied as Dorothy herself. "Go away!" sputtered the fat King, waving his arms irritably. "Go away, little girl, and don't bother me."

"And kindly bow as you leave," directed the White Horse, lifting one foot sternly. "You are looking at the Emperor of Oz and his Imperial Charger."

Bowing more from astonishment than intention, Dorothy backed a few steps, then turned round and ran madly toward the Royal Banquet Hall.

CHAPTER 8

WAY FOR THE EMPEROR!

"Here, give her water! Give her air! Stand back, everybody. Now, then, what's the matter, child?" The Scarecrow bent solicitously over the little girl who had rushed into the banquet hall screaming hysterically about disappearances and white horses and fallen breathlessly into the chair

beside him. "Come, tell uncle all about it," begged the Scarecrow, patting Dorothy clumsily on the head.

"Tell you!" choked poor Dorothy, twisting her best handkerchief into a hard knot. "Do I have to tell you? Can't you see for yourselves that Ozma is missing, that the Wizard and Jinnicky are gone, that Glinda and the Tin Woodman, that the King and Queen of the Gillikens and the King and Queen of the Munchkins have vanished entirely? And yet here you sit, singing and laughing as if nothing at all had happened. Can't you understand that something dreadful has happened to Ozma and that a big, fat, funny-looking man and a white horse are sitting on the throne of Oz?"

"Ozma, Ozma who's she?" murmured the banqueters, looking vaguely at Dorothy and then at each other.

"She's feverish, that's what." Herby, the Medicine Man,²⁰ leaned over to touch Dorothy expertly on the forehead. "I'd advise you to go upstairs and lie down, my dear."

"Yes, who don't you?" urged Betsy Bobbin, coming over to put her arm around Dorothy's waist. "I'll go up with you and lend you my very best smelling salts."

"Lie down, with that big, fat interloper on the throne of Oz?" wailed Dorothy. Squirring out of Betsy's embrace, she started indignantly to her feet. "You must be crazy! Camy! Kabumpo! Snufferbux! Toto! You you'll believe me, won't you?" Hurrying over to the second table, Dorothy looked pleadingly down the long board from the Hungry Tiger at the head to the Cowardly Lion at the foot.

"There, there," mumbled Kabumpo, lifting Dorothy up in his trunk. "don't go

on so, my dear, we all have these little funny spells. Here, sit up on my back so you'll have a good view of the Emperor when he arrives. Hi, there he comes now! Ray! Ray! Way for Skamperoo, Emperor of Oz!" Waving Dorothy in his trunk as if she had been a flag, Kabumpo plopped down on his knees and banged his big head three times on the polished floor. From her precarious position Dorothy saw the same fat imposter who had been in the throne room riding his white charger pompously into the Banquet Hall, the horse nodding to the left and right and grinning like a Cheshire Cat.

Cheers, bows and a loud burst of applause and music made his entry so noisy Dorothy's angry protests and cries were entirely drowned out. Disgusted, confused and completely bewildered by the behavior of Ozma's subjects and her own best friends, Dorothy jerked away from Kabumpo and darted through a long French window into the garden. What could it mean? What could have happened? Had all her former memories of Oz been a dream? No, no! Violently, Dorothy decided against such an idea. Rather was this fat emperor a dream, a maddening nightmare from which she would presently awaken. Leaning dizzily against a golden fawn set near a crystal garden pool, Dorothy tried to find some reasonable explanation of the whole dreadful mixup. And here, several minutes later, Pigasus, the winged Pig, found her.

"Thought a little fly over the treetops might help your head," grunted Pigasus, looking unhappily down his pink snout. "Nothing like a little fly for a headache, my girl!"

"My head's all right," answered Dorothy sullenly. "It's the rest of you who have lost your heads or your senses. How in Oz you could stand in there cheering that big, fat fraud I'll never, never understand. Piggins, Piggins

dear" Dorothy bent coaxingly over him "surely you remember

Ozma and the Wizard and Glinda." Instead of answering at once, Pigasus stared thoughtfully at his reflection in the pool.

"Suppose you sit on my back, and then we can talk without being heard," he suggested brightly. "Up in the air we can air our views in safety, as it were."

"To tell the truth, I don't much care where I go now," sighed Dorothy, seating herself disconsolately on the pig's broad back.

"Hey, Hey, we're bewitched and enchanted, I knew it! With you on my back, I can think and see through it!" squealed Pigasus, and flapping his huge wings, he soared high over the flowering plum trees in Ozma's garden.

"Of course Ozma's Queen, not this big Skamperoo. The Ruler of Oz and the whole royal crew

Have been kidnapped, bewitched or put out of the way We'll fly off for help, and we'll start right away."

"Oh, Piggins!" Dorothy threw both arms round the pig's neck and almost wept for joy:

"Oh Pigasus, to think you remember them, too, But where have they gone? What in Oz shall we do?"

"We'll find them, wherever they are they'll be found, But we'd best make our plans with our feet on the ground," muttered Pigasus, looking below for a likely spot to land.

There was one disadvantage about Pigasus, though some did not regard it as such. Like the winged horse Pegasus, whoever caught him and rode on his back at once became a poet and unable to speak anything but rhymes. The

poetic pig could not only tell what they were thinking, but he often spoke his own mind in verse as well. At times this grew terribly tiresome, but except for his jingles, a more cheerful, loyal, little fellow could not be found in the length or breadth of the country. Raised and bred by the Red Jinn, he had been given to the Duke of Dork. The Duke had given him to the Philadelphia boy Peter, who in the course of a voyage with Samuel Salt, the Pirate, had captured the Duke's splendid castle boat. The capture had been quite a social and friendly affair, and the Duke had traded Pigasus for a Bananny Goat. Peter had later brought the flying pig to the Emerald City, where he was petted and admired by the whole court. Now, slanting down into a quiet grove, Pigasus came to a gentle stop, and Dorothy tumbled off his back.

"Oh, Pigasus, isn't it lucky you were in the Emerald City? Nobody else can remember Ozma or the others at all."

"And I only remembered them because you sat on my back," confessed the pig, twitching his nose thoughtfully. "It was my thought-reading gift that did the trick, and I am more than ever convinced that we are under some mischievous spell or enchantment. What I don't understand, my dear, is how you yourself escaped or chanced to remember things as they were. You know, before I came out here, it seemed perfectly right and natural for that roly poly pudding of an Emperor to be sitting at the head of the table. I knew no more about Ozma or Glinda or my former master Jinnicky than a newborn baby. By the way, Jinnicky's gone too, isn't he?"

"Yes," Dorothy shook her head sorrowfully, "and without him or the Wizard to help, we'll have a hard time, I guess. What shall we do first, Piggins?"

"How about having a try at some of the Wizard's magic?" proposed the pink

pig daringly. "Then we might look in Ozma's magic picture and ask it to show us where all of our missing friends are now."

"Now why didn't I think of that myself?" cried Dorothy, and springing up she started off on a run.

"Wait! Wait!" grunted Pigasus, pattering breathlessly after her. "Remember, we must be very careful, my dear. No questions about Ozma, no remarks that will arouse the anger of this scalawag Emperor, or we'll both be clapped in a dungeon. We must pretend that we have forgotten, too, and get away quietly later tonight."

This seemed so sensible a plan, Dorothy readily agreed to it, and without attracting any attention at all they re-entered the palace and hurried immediately to Ozma's small sitting room. But if they expected the magic picture to solve their problem, they were soon doomed to disappointment.

The picture was gone from its accustomed place, and the safe where Ozma kept her magic treasures and other valuables was wide open and quite empty. A quick search of the Wizard's laboratory proved equally discouraging. The Wizard's famous black bag was nowhere in sight, the little hanging closet where he stored his transformation powders and wishing pills was bare as the cupboard of old Mother Hubbard.

"Whoever planned this thought of everything," wheezed Pigasus, sitting heavily back on his haunches. "There is nothing here for us, Dorothy. If I were you, I'd get a few things together, and we'll leave right away before anyone misses you." From the cheers, shouts and hilarious singing coming from the banquet hall it seemed probably that the celebration would go on for hours. No one in that gay and foolish company even thought of or missed

the little girl and the pink pig stealing so quietly through the dim halls of the palace.

"Ozma's palace," reflected Dorothy, looking resentfully over her shoulder; but now it seemed strange, alien and completely unfriendly. With a little shiver, Dorothy drew her cloak more closely about her and stepped resolutely out into the night. Pigasus pattered on ahead, snorting a bit from sheer nervousness.

"Maybe we'd better fly," he grunted uneasily as Dorothy caught up with him.

"It's safer, and it's faster, and the faster we get away from here, the better, I'm thinking."

"I've been thinking, too," answered Dorothy in a low voice, "perhaps only the people in the Emerald City are under this forgetting spell, Pigasus; perhaps if we fly to the Winkie Country, the Winkies will remember their Emperor, the Tin Woodman, and will help us raise an army so we can come back, conquer this old Skamperoo, and make him tell where he has hidden all the proper rulers of Oz and the other celebrities."

"That's the talk! That's the talk!" approved the pig, twinkling his little blue eyes joyfully. "Up with you, up with you, my girl, but remember, if you grow sleepy, let me know at once, so I can descend. If you fall asleep, you might fall off my back, and think how I'd feel then."

"Think how I'd feel!" laughed Dorothy, her spirits lifting a little at the pink pig's comical conversation and enthusiastic seconding of her plans. Seating herself carefully on his plump back, she quickly gave the signal to start. Then up soared Pigasus, over the palace gardens, over the City Walls and away toward the East and the Yellow Lands of the Winkies.

"Oh, I believe everything is going to be all right," thought Dorothy,

settling herself cozily between his wings.

"So do I," sniffed the pink pig, peering mischievously over his shoulder.

"I forgot you could read all the thoughts, Goodness Gracious!

Of those on your back, Do you mind it, Pigasus?"

"Now when they're nice thoughts like yours," puffed the little pig in answer to Dorothy's surprised rhyme, and winking his eye jovially, he zoomed like a pink Zeppelin through the sky.

CHAPTER 9

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

For several hours Pigasus flew without slackening his pace. Then, as several suspicious little yawns and sighs floated past his keen, upstanding ears, he solemnly slanted downward. If he had chosen it on purpose, he could not have found a more comfortable place for Dorothy to spend the night. They had already crossed the border and penetrated far into the Land of the Winkies and were now landing in the quiet garden of a prosperous Winkie farmer. Set in the center of a dancing bed of yellow daffodils and tulips stood a small summerhouse, and with Dorothy rubbing her eyes sleepily, Pigasus trotted briskly into the rustic cottage. The door was invitingly open, and the moon lit up its cozy one-roomed interior. Snorting with satisfaction, Pigasus pattered over to a broad couch piled high with yellow cushions, and rolling drowsily from his back, Dorothy burrowed contentedly into the center of them, falling asleep before the pig reached his own bed, a soft, woolly rug on the hearth.

Pigasus slept lightly but well, and waking around six began to gaze rather

anxiously at the round yellow farm buildings just visible from the door.

The pink pig had had several unfortunate experiences with farmers. They had a way of looking at his plump body that seemed to reduce him at once to slices of bacon and sides of ham. One enterprising fellow had actually caught him and shut him up in an untidy pen. From this foolish prison Pigasus had escaped by spreading his wings and flying away, but the mere mention of farmer gave him the shivers.

So now, moving impatiently about the little room, he waited for Dorothy to awaken, and as she continued to slumber on, he flew up over the mantel and swept a large yellow jug to the floor with his wing. The crash of the falling jar aroused Dorothy at once, and without stopping to explain, Pigasus suggested that they start off, and Dorothy, not even noticing the broken jug, readily consented.

"We'll probably find a much better place to have breakfast as we fly along," murmured Pigasus as Dorothy seated herself between his wings, holding her small basket of supplies in her lap.

"Would it do any harm to stop at the farm And enquire about Ozma and spread the alarm?" asked Dorothy, who had rather counted on a cheerful breakfast at the farmhouse.

"No, it wouldn't do any harm," answered Pigasus, rising in a straight line from the tulip bed and winging rapidly over the yellow fields and fences, "but neither would it do any good. Farmers never know what's happening or going to happen. I tell you, though, we'll ask the first person we meet."

"Who would we meet in the air but a bird? Now really, Pigasus, that's simply absurd."

"Some of the smartest people I know are birds," insisted the pig stoutly.

"Take Roger, for instance. He knows more than most of have forgotten. But look! A brook, a quiet wood! Stop! Listen! Look! For I crave food!" Making a swift downward curve, Pigasus landed cleverly by a rippling stream edged by some tall butternut trees. There were yellow raspberries along the bank, and the berries, with some of the sandwiches Dorothy had brought with her, washed down by cool water from the brook, made a splendid breakfast.

"I wonder whether they'll have the tableaux and pageant without me," sighed Dorothy, biting slowly into a sardine sandwich, "and how they manage the circus without you, Piggins, or the picnic supper without Ozma, or the magic and fireworks without the Wizard."

"They've probably forgotten all about today's doings," mumbled Pigasus, nosing busily among the leaves for ripe butternuts. They'll probably spend the time bumping their noses on the floor when that fat Emperor comes waddling through the palace and bending the right knee every time his white horse sneezes or coughs. Pah!" Choking with indignation, Pigasus began gobbling up so many butternuts, Dorothy feared he would never be able to fly or walk again.

"Let's stay on the ground for a while," she proposed, eyeing him rather nervously as she packed the remaining sandwiches neatly back in the basket.

"I believe there's a path beyond those trees. Maybe it leads to a town or village where we may meet someone who can tell us what we want to know."

"You don't expect to find out where Ozma and the others are hidden straight off, do you?" Rubbing his back lazily against one of the butternut trees, Pigasus looked quizzically at his earnest little companion.

"No, I don't really expect that," said Dorothy, slipping the basket over her

arm, "but it would be pretty nice if we met somebody who even remembered them after all we've been through."

"I can hardly remember them myself unless you are sitting on my back," admitted the pink pig, trotting soberly along at her side. "This Emperor's magic must be strong medicine. Hello! Here comes a fisherman." Pigasus pricked up both ears and his wings. "Shall I question him, or will you?"

Without bothering to answer, Dorothy ran eagerly toward the tall Winkie who was coming leisurely along the path. He carried a basket and had a fishing rod over his shoulder, and though his clothes were rough, Dorothy could tell by his manner and bearing that he was a person of some importance.

"Oh, please, Mr. Winkie," cried the little girl as he nodded politely and would have passed them without stopping, "could you tell us who is King here?"

"King?" answered the fisherman, taking his pipe out of his mouth and looking kindly down at his small questioner. "Why, no one in particular, my dear, but of course we Winkies and the inhabitants of the three other countries of Oz are governed from the capital by Emperor Skamperoo, a great fellow, our Emp, and have you seen his white horse?"

"Yes, I've seen it," said Dorothy, shutting her mouth rather grimly.

"But I thought Ozma was Queen," wheezed Pigasus, out of breath from running after Dorothy and too many butternuts.

"Ozma? What a curious name," mused the fisherman, looking pensively at the winged pig. "What gave you the idea that Ozma was our ruler? Perhaps you are strangers here."

"Well, it would seem so," puffed Pigasus, sitting down and panting a little from sheer discouragement.

"Oh, you'll get used to us," laughed the fisherman with a breezy wave. "Fine country, this; sorry I can't show you 'round, but as I've promised my wife some fish for dinner, I'll have to be moving along. Good day to you. Good day, little girl!"

"Good day," echoed Dorothy in a rather flat voice as the fisherman, lifting his hat, strode briskly into the wood. "You see!" she groaned. "Even here everyone is bewitched. Oh, Piggins, what'll we do? No one in Oz will help or believe us."

"Goose-tea and turnips! What if they don't!" Pigasus shook his head impatiently. "There are other countries, aren't there? Take Ev, for instance, or Rinkitink, or the Rose Kingdom. Why, there are lots of places whose rulers will remember Ozma, my poor old friend Jinnicky, and the others. Come along, my girl, we've only just started.

"While people roar for the Emperor We'll seek our rightful ruler

>From coast to coast, from door to door
Though foes grow cruel and crueller!"

"What we need is some magic," finished Pigasus shrewdly. "Know a good place to look for some?"

"The Gnome King has plenty of magic," reflected Dorothy, leaning thoughtfully against a tree, and Ozma and I really helped put him on the throne, so surely he'll help us."

"Well, maybe, but I don't set great store by gnomes. They're tricky; nevertheless, we'll go to Ev and everywhere else till we restore this country to its proper rulers." Pigasus looked so impressive with his chest and cheeks puffed out with purpose, Dorothy gave him a quick hug. "Down with the Emperor!" snorted Pigasus, though almost suffocated by Dorothy's

embrace. "And up with you, my patriotic young Princess."

"Now you make me feel like a real one. I'd almost forgotten I was a Princess," smiled Dorothy, climbing obediently on his back. "I believe everything will be better from now on."

"Well, it could be a lot worse," chuckled Pigasus, and flapping his wings in a businesslike manner, he rose gracefully into the air and headed for the east. Rolling hills dotted with castles, villages and towns, valleys, farmlands and forests flashed in an ever-changing, pleasant panorama below. At noon they came down beside the Winkie River, finished up the rest of the sandwiches for lunch, and then looked eagerly around for someone else to question. But the yellow-bearded ferryman who presently came into sight poling his old-fashioned raft across the turbulent river knew no more of Ozma and the other rulers of Oz than the fisherman. But he told them many long and boring stories of Skamperoo and his white horse, Chalk. Dorothy and Pigasus had to make such an effort to listen politely, they were relieved when he finally shoved off and began poling himself back to the other side.

"Have you any idea how far we've come?" asked Pigasus, rolling over and over in the cool grass as Dorothy made a face at the ferryman's back.

"Yes," said Dorothy, dropping full length beside him. "This river is in about the center of the Winkie Kingdom, so we are easily half way. We could reach the Deadly Desert by night, fly over tomorrow morning, and either go North to Ev or stop at the underground castle of the Gnome King. Even if he won't lend us his army, he might lend us some magic."

"Speaking of armies, they must have whisked the soldier with the green whiskers off with the others. I don't remember seeing him after he left the

banquet hall, do you? Which just goes to show this Skamperoo must be a stranger to Oz, for who else would have been afraid of our precious old army? Why, he wouldn't even tread on a caterpillar. By the way, has Kaliko any magic that might tell us where to look for our vanished friends and rulers?"

"I'm not sure of that," Dorothy told him dubiously, "but he was a wizard, and Ruggedo, who was King before Kaliko, had many magic treasures and powers. He could make floors and walls spin round and round, open yawning caverns at your feet, or drop rocks down on your head without even moving."

"Sounds lovely," sniffed Pigasus, coming to his feet with a short grunt.

"Say, haven't we trouble enough at home without going to look for it? Do you really propose to visit this tricky little metal monarch?"

"But Kaliko is not nearly so bad as Ruggedo." Dorothy sat up and smoothed her dress earnestly.

"Well, just as you wish." Pigasus shrugged his wings. "With me, people are like eggs, either good or bad. There's no such thing as a nearly good egg; it's got to be completely good, or it's just as bad as a bad egg. D'ye see? And if this Gnome King is only as good as a nearly fresh egg, I wouldn't trust him with my second-best toothbrush. My idea would be to go to the ruler of Ev."

"That's Evarado, a boy King. Ozma helped him, too," Dorothy explained importantly. "But I tell you, Piggins, let's not decide till we cross the Deadly Desert. Something might turn up before then. You never can tell."

"No," agreed the pig, shaking his head sagely. "In Oz, you never can.

Suppose we continue a ways on foot? My wings are a bit stiff, and we really

should be on the lookout for a friendly house or castle where we could have supper and spend the night. I could eat a peck of spinach or a bushel of apples right now, so hop up, my dear, and I'll stretch a leg for the good of the coz and Oz!" Chattering away like the good fellow he was, Pigasus trotted briskly across the fields and presently came to a deep, rustling forest. "Shall we fly over or walk through?" questioned the pig, sniffing appreciatively the cool air drifting out to them.

"Let's go through it, in a wood There might be witches, some are good.

A good witch with her magic powers Could solve this mystery of ours!"

"But suppose we meet a bad one," muttered Pigasus, stepping gingerly into the forest and picking his way with great care between the giant trees.

"Then we'll say goodbye and simply fly," laughed Dorothy, snapping her fingers joyfully.

"Yes, but flying would not be so easy in here," objected Pigasus with a troubled glance aloft. "These branches are interlocked so closely I'd stick in a tree like a kite."

"Oh, we probably won't meet anyone," said Dorothy. Slipping off his back, she walked along beside him, one arm flung cozily around his neck. She was rather tired of making verses and thought she could think better if her head were not continually buzzing with rhymes. After the hot, sunny meadows, the cool shade of the forest was very welcome, but as they advanced farther and farther into the shadows, it grew so dark and grim the two began to look at each other in real alarm.

"Must be a squall or thundershower brewing," observed Pigasus in a faint voice.

"Yes, it couldn't be nighttime so soon," agreed Dorothy, looking fearfully

over her shoulder. The crackling of twigs as some large animal made its way through the brush sounded like gunfire, and while they were trying to make up their minds whether to run back or push forward, a long, hollow roar sent them skittering forward practically as one. Missing trees by mere inches, they pelted at breakneck speed into the dense and even gloomier stretch of woodland ahead.

"B-b-b-better climb on my back," directed Pigasus, halting at last from lack of breath rather than inclination.

"But where are you? I can't even see you!" wailed Dorothy, feeling about wildly.

"Here, here," grunted the frantic pig, making short dashes in four or five directions and finally bumping violently into the groping little girl.

Snatching at a wing, Dorothy pulled herself thankfully up and clasped both arms round his neck. In a tense and breathless silence they waited for it to grow lighter. They could not see even an inch before their noses now, and the darkness and silence grew more oppressive and unbearable every minute.

"J-j-j-just a cloud passing over," croaked Pigasus, trying to keep his teeth from chattering. "J-j-j-j Say, what's that? Dorothy, do you hear anything? F-f-footsteps not four, TWO. Someone's coming. Hello, there. Who are you? Watch out now, we're here."

"I see you," answered a flat, matter-of-fact voice.

"Oh! He sees us, yet we can't see him, I'm frightened deaf and dumb, Oh, try to fly, Pigasus, why Oh why'd we ever come?"

"That's what I'd like to know," went on the voice sternly. "Now, then, will

you come quietly, or must I drag you along?"

CHAPTER 10

THE WITCH OF THE BLACK FOREST

Dorothy and her companion were too stunned to answer, and in two thumping steps the owner of the voice was upon them. "Do you dare to defy a member of the Invincible Black Watch?" breathed the stranger, grasping Pigasus roughly by the right wing.

"No! No! We don't exactly defy you," squealed the pig, flapping his other wing frantically, "but how can we follow a blackguard whom we cannot even see?"

"Then how do you know I am a blackguard?" demanded their captor suspiciously.

"From your voice," screamed Pigasus, jerking this way and that way in an effort to free himself. "I'd know you for a blackguard anywhere. Unhand me, you surly black monster."

"You talk a lot for a fellow who cannot see," scoffed the Guard, tightening his grip on the pig's wing. "Is the girl blind, too?"

"We're not blind at all, and why should we be, In this horrid black forest how could we see?" cried Dorothy, her indignation getting the better of her fright.

"Well, what color are your eyes?" Dorothy felt the hot breath of the Guardsman on her neck as he leaned over to find out for himself. "Blue!" he murmured in evident puzzlement. "And the pig's eyes are blue, too. So that's the reason."

"What has the color to do with it?" grunted Pigasus, growing a little calmer

as the conversation progressed without either of them coming to actual harm.

"Everything," explained the Guard impressively. "In the Black Forest one must have black eyes to see. See? Even a pig should know that."

"Well, I suppose I could run into a tree and black my eyes," sniffed Pigasus bitterly. "But thank you, no. I prefer blue eyes, and now, if you will kindly conduct us to the edge of this deep, dark, dangerous and disgusting domain, we'll be delighted to go, leave, depart, and bid you farewell forever."

"Oh, keep all that for Gloma," drawled the Guard indifferently. "I'm a plain man and prefer plain language. Furthermore, no one leaves this forest unless they break the black laws. If you break the law, you are cast out into the utter and awful light of eternal day. Now then, come along!" and giving the pig's wing a cruel tweak, he tramped doggedly forward. Pigasus, to save his precious feathers, was obliged to come, suiting his gait to the guard's strides.

"The best thing for us to do is to break the law at once," he whispered mournfully to Dorothy as he blinked about in a desperate effort to penetrate the gloom. Dorothy was too depressed to answer, and after clearing his throat several times, the Blackguard began to question Pigasus.

"Why the wings?" he asked inquiringly. "I've seen many a farmyard creature in my day, but never a pig with wings. Are you a pig or a kind of balcony bird? What right has a pig to wings?"

"Let go and I'll show you," puffed Pigasus, hoping the fellow's curiosity

would cause him to loosen his hold. But the Guard only laughed at such an idea.

"Let you go? I should say not," he exclaimed with a little chuckle. "You can show all your little tricks to Gloma, and she can decide whether to ride or roast you. This girl on your back will make a splendid slave."

"Slave!" shrielled Pigasus, stumbling angrily along in the dark. "I'll have you know that she is a Princess of Oz and lives in the palace of Ozma of Oz."

"Then why did she not stay there?" observed the Guard reasonably enough.

"Anyone coming into this forest comes under the rule of Gloma, Witch of the Black Forest."

"Witch?" coughed the pig as Dorothy, tightening her clutch on his neck, almost choked him.

"Yes, witch," repeated the forester calmly. "Now then, hold up your heads, you pale and pinky skins, for you are in for a good blacking." And before Pigasus knew just what WAS happening, the ground slipped away from under him and he and Dorothy were plunged into the rough, chilly waters of a tumbling forest stream. Striking out with all four feet, Pigasus managed to breast the flood, when he felt himself and Dorothy being forced completely under. As a matter of fact, the Guard swimming beside him had simply put his hand on Dorothy's head and pushed her and the squealing pig beneath the surface. As they rose, gasping and sputtering, he again seized Pigasus by the wing and pulled him quickly to shore.

"There, now you're all right," he boomed heartily as Dorothy rolled off the pig's back and began shaking the water from her eyes and hair and wringing out her dripping skirts. "Just blot yourselves on the bank!"

"Bl-blot ourselves?" gurgled Pigasus, giving himself a violent shake. "Do you take us for letters? You you'll be sorry for this!" But right in the middle of his angry sputters, he gave a loud and astonished squall.

"Dorothy, Dorothy, I can see!" panted the pink pig exultantly.

"So can I," cried Dorothy, running excitedly toward him. "But everything looks black. Everything IS black, even you. Oh, Oh! You're perfectly coal black, Piggins. Am I black, too?"

"Of course," answered the Guard in a bored voice, "and much better so. Since you are black yourselves, you can see in the dark like the rest of us, and what do you think of our forest now?" But Dorothy, instead of telling him, held up her shiny black hands, touched a few strands of her perfectly black hair, and then, dropping her head on the pig's shoulder, began to weep bitterly. Like drops of ink, the tears coursed down her ebony cheeks, and though Pigasus did what he could to comfort her, she continued to sob as if her heart would break.

"Well, I must say I call this ungrateful," the Guard shifted from one foot to the other. "What's the matter with you, anyway? Black is a splendid color, doesn't show dirt, doesn't fade or streak. Besides, it's against the law to be any other color in this forest."

"How dare you blacken us against our will?" burst out Pigasus furiously.

"Wait till I get loose, I'll Why, I'll tear you to pieces²⁰and pitch you into a tar barrel."

"Oh, don't make me snort!" The huge Black Forester stared contemptuously down at the winged pig, and now that Pigasus had a better look at him, he saw the folly of his threats, for the Black Guard was well over six feet

and lean and tough as black leather. Evidently feeling he had wasted enough time on the pair, he gave them a very black look, and jerking the pig's wing roughly, started walking stolidly through the forest. Never had Dorothy felt so blue or rather so black and blue so wet, so discouraged, so thoroughly miserable! And when, sticking out her tongue to see if it was still pink she discovered that it, too, was black, she began sobbing softly to herself.

"No one will know us anymore," she decided dejectedly. "We're as badly off now as Ozma and the others. Why, oh why, did we ever come into this terrible forest?" She could feel Pigasus sniffing with sympathy, and suddenly realizing that she was not behaving very well, she straightened up. After all, she was still a Princess, even though she was black.

Princesses did not cry even when they were captured and enchanted. Ozma was probably in a worse fix than this, and if Ozma was being brave, she would be brave too. So with a great effort, Dorothy stifled her sobs and began to look around her. To her surprise and astonishment, she discovered that the Black Forest was not dark and gloomy as it had seemed before, but really quite beautiful. There were many shades and degrees of blackness in the trees and flowers that thickly carpeted the ground.

Black birds twittered musically in the branches overhead, and every now and then a deer peered timidly out at her from the woodsy depths between the tree trunks. The Guard, glancing over his shoulder and catching her interested expression, ventured a smile.

"Why, he is not bad looking at all," thought Dorothy with a pleased start.

"And maybe this witch may be a good witch her name sounds rather pretty." Quite comforted by these reflections, Dorothy whispered a few

rhymed remarks in the pig's ear. Pigasus, it must be confessed, was as interested in what he saw as Dorothy, and when a sudden break between the trees revealed a great, black, circular wall with a hundred black flags floating from its many turrets, he gave an involuntary grunt of admiration.

"You are about to enter the Royal Circle of Gloma, Witch of the Black Forest," announced the Guard, raising his hand solemnly. "I trust you will conduct yourselves in a fitting manner."

"Don't worry about OUR manners," shrilled Pigasus, tossing his head airily.

"We are accustomed to Royalty and move in exclusive circles at home."

"And talk in circles, too," muttered the Guard impatiently. "Well, well, do the best you can and bow three times as you approach the throne."

"Throne?" queried Dorothy, slipping off the pig's back so she would not have to talk in rhyme, for what she had to say to the black witch was very serious indeed. "Is Gloma a Queen?"

"Certainly our witch is a Queen, a bewitching Queen," retorted the Guard, taking Dorothy firmly by the hand and tightening his hold on Pigasus. "Now then, smile and look pleasant, and perhaps she'll allow you to be her slave."

"She wouldn't dare make me a slave," cried Dorothy, trying her best to pull away from her captor.

"Just let her try it!" blustered Pigasus, scuffling unwillingly along on the other side. But paying no attention to their struggles, the Guard lifted his foot and kicked three times on a black ebony door in the wall, and a tall Watchman dressed in a black leather suit admitted them to the Royal Circle. It was all so different from what Dorothy had been expecting, she

almost forgot her anger. Enclosed by the black marble wall was a strange and enchanting garden. Now Dorothy had never seen a black garden or dreamed one could be so beautiful. Here sable willows mirrored their feathery branches in long, shining pools; here black plum and cherry trees flaunted their fragile black blossoms, and jet-black fountains sent their smoking waters high into the quiet air. Vast satiny expanses of lawn were dotted with a hundred beds of dusky roses, tulips, velvety pansies and daffodils. Built all round the circular wall was a low but sumptuous black castle, and seated on an ebony throne in the center of her stately black garden was the Black Queen herself, looking, Dorothy was thankful to discover, much more like a Queen than a witch. Gloma's face was sweet and serious, her hair fine and glossy as a raven's wing. She was dressed in a trailing robe black chiffon that billowed in lacy clouds round her feet. A sparkling crown of jet and long jet earrings were her only ornaments. On each side of the Black Queen crouched a sleek black leopard, and behind the ebony throne stood ten tall foresters with gleaming axes. "Like headsmen in a medieval history book," thought Dorothy as she and Pigasus were dragged rapidly forward. Gloma, gazing dreamily into a black crystal set on a marble stand before the throne, seemed entirely unaware of their presence till the harsh voice of the Black Guard announced them.

"Hail! Black and Imperial Majesty!" called the Guard deferentially, approaching the throne. "Two prisoners, a pig and a Princess, whom I found wandering unlawfully in our forest and whom I took the liberty of blacking."

Dorothy, jerking away from the Guard, was about to explain how she and Pigasus had lost their way when Gloma jumped to her feet with a sharp,

agonized scream. "Blotz, General Blotz, what have you done?" panted the Black Queen, beating her hands wildly together. "Your stupidity has ruined us all! You have blackened and insulted my most dangerous and mortal enemy! Leave! Go! Begone and never darken my doors again! Oh why, why did you do it? Why have you brought her here? After all these years must I too be destroyed and obliterated?" Sinking back on her throne, Gloma covered her face with her hair and began rocking backward and forward in agitation and sorrow.

"Why, why I believe she's afraid of you!" puffed Pigasus, twitching his tail with excitement and interest as General Blotz, looking quite dazed, began to move unhappily toward the gate in the wall.

"Quick!" he grunted as the ten foresters back of the throne rushed forward to surround them. "Do something, Dorothy, while she is still afraid of you. Make her unblacken us. Tell her to set us free. Hurry! Hurry, before she discovers you are only a harmless little girl." But Dorothy, only half listening to the pig, boldly thrust aside the foresters and ran over to the Black Queen.

"Why are you afraid of ME?" asked Dorothy, speaking rapidly but distinctly.

"I did not come here on purpose. Pigasus and I are lost and need your help."

"Help?" shivered Gloma, shrinking as far away from Dorothy as possible. "Why should I help you? Are you not Dorothy, the mortal girl who destroyed the powerful Witches of the East and West?"

"But that was long ago," explained Dorothy breathlessly as two of the Queen's henchmen seized her roughly by the arms. "And they were bad and

wicked witches. Why should I wish to destroy such a good and beautiful witch like you?"

"Do not listen to her. Do not let her touch you. She means to destroy and ensnare you," hissed the foresters as they dragged Dorothy away from the throne. "Down with all mortals! Away to the dungeons with her! Wing that pig! Chop off their heads!" At these loud, savage cries, startled faces appeared at the windows of the black palace, and struggling in the midst of the foresters Dorothy heartily wished she had taken the pig's advice.

"Shall we take off her head now or later?" puffed the fellow who had hold of her left arm.

"Now!" roared the axman who had hold of her right.

"Stop!" commanded the Queen, rising suddenly. "You cannot harm this girl. Do you not see the star of protection on her forehead?" At these words the woodsmen stared fearfully down at Dorothy, and sure enough, shining in the center of her black forehead was a pure white star. Pigasus, who had not noticed it before himself, gave a grunt of relief and began kicking out in every direction.

"How about the pig?" yelled a forester, leaning down to rub his shins.

"Shall we take off his head?"

"If you dare touch Pigasus," screamed Dorothy, resolved to use all the powers she was supposed to have, "I'll turn you all to bats and beetles and horrid black ants." A breathless silence followed Dorothy's threat. The foresters still kept their hold on the prisoner, but at as great a distance as they could manage.

"Do as you wish, comrades," the tallest of the axmen solemnly broke the silence, "but I'm for letting them alone. I've never been an ant before and

don't intend to begin now. Come, away to the dungeons with them. This is not for us to settle with axes, it is a case for witch work."

"You are right." The Queen, who had been standing motionless as a statue, took a decisive step forward. "Take them away, but not to the dungeons! Take them to the darkroom in my imperial palace. They shall see what happens to those who defy Gloma, Witch of the Black Forest."

"Aye! Aye! They shall see," muttered the foresters, pushing Dorothy and Pigasus roughly along ahead of them.

CHAPTER 11

BLACK MAGIC

Dorothy and Pigasus were hustled into the Black Castle, rushed down its shiny black corridors and thrust into a great, dark, dome-shaped room so quickly they had no opportunity to exchange a word.

"Well, anyway, even if it is a darkroom, we can still see," whispered Dorothy as the foresters in their haste to get away from such dangerous prisoners fairly tumbled over each other to get through the door.

"Yes," puffed Pigasus glumly as the key rasped in the lock, "and the first thing I see is that there are no windows. If there was a window we could fly off. As it is, this witch will make short work of us."

"I wonder how much magic she really knows," sighed Dorothy, seating herself wearily on a black velvet stool.

"I wonder!" said Pigasus, flinging himself crossly on the floor beside her.

"And what's all this stuff about your being her worst enemy? Did you really destroy two witches, and could you destroy her?" Although Pigasus had lived

in the Emerald City for several years, he was not familiar with all of the history that had taken place before his arrival.

"Oh, all that happened when I first came here," explained Dorothy, clasping her knees with both hands. "You see, when the cyclone blew me from Kansas to Oz, my house fell on the wicked witch who ruled the Munchkins and killed her. The Munchkins, supposing I had done it on purpose, came out and thanked me and gave me the witch's silver shoes. Then, when I reached the Emerald City and begged the Wizard, who was ruler of Oz at that time, to send me back to Kansas, he promised to do so if I killed the wicked witch who ruled the Winkies."

"And did you?" asked Pigasus, rolling over and looking up at Dorothy with real admiration.

"Well, that was sort of an accident, too," admitted the little girl honestly. "When the Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow and the Cowardly Lion and I reached the witch's yellow castle, the witch captured us all and made me work hard from morning till night. But one day," Dorothy with an anxious eye on the door hurriedly continued, "one day when she tried to steal my silver shoes, I got SO mad I picked up a bucket of water I'd been using for scrubbing and flung it right over her head."

"And did that destroy her?" Pigasus demanded incredulously.

"Yes," said Dorothy, "it melted her down to nothing at all."

"But what about the star? I never noticed that before."

"That's where the Good Witch of the North comes in," answered Dorothy proudly. "Right after my house fell on the Wicked Witch of the West, she appeared, and when she discovered I was a mortal, she kissed me on the forehead to keep me from harm all the time I was in Oz. It only shows now

because I'm black, I suppose."

"Well, why didn't it keep you from turning black, if it's so wonderful?"

Pegasus switched his curly tail resentfully.

"I don't know." Dorothy looked thoughtfully around Gloma's strange laboratory. "Maybe the spell has worn off; maybe there's no harm in being black."

"Humph! There may not be any harm in it, but it's pretty sad and mournful, if you ask me," grunted Pegasus, glaring savagely at his satiny black sides. "I prefer myself pink and you pink and white the way you were. Tea and turnips, first thing I know you'll be powdering your nose with ashes and soot! But, after all" Pegasus swung himself energetically to his feet "that is the least of our troubles. What do you suppose this witch will do to us now? And what can we do to her? Sa-hay!" Spreading his wings, Pegasus spun round in a triumphant circle. "All we have to do is to find some water. Why, it's simple as soup. Quick, Dorothy, look and see whether there is any water around here, then as soon as Gloma pops her nose in the door, we'll put her out as neatly as you did that other witch."

"But those other witches were bad, and Gloma seems really good and beautiful," objected Dorothy, looking around without much enthusiasm.

"Beautiful or not, she's a dark and dangerous lady," insisted the pig, beginning his search in a methodical way, "and it's her beauty or ours, remember; this Black Queen is quite determined to destroy us if we don't destroy her first."

"Yes, I suppose so," agreed Dorothy. Slowly following Pegasus, she pulled aside black velvet curtains, peered behind cupboards and screens, and

looked under sofas and chairs. There were many ebony cabinets standing against the wall, but each one was securely locked, and except for a great black crystal ball on a table in the center of the room there seemed to be no magic apparatus at all. A dark lantern swinging from the domed ceiling cast its curious luminous black rays into every corner of the witch's laboratory. After circling the room three times, Pigasus and Dorothy were forced to admit there was no water of any kind or even a pail available.

"We'll have to think of something else," grumbled the pig as Dorothy again sat down on her stool.

"Are you thinking?" he demanded sharply as the little girl stared absently at the tips of her boots.

"No," confessed Dorothy frankly, "I was just wondering why Gloma calls this a darkroom. She must know since General Blotz ducked us under the Black River we can see in here as well as in the forest."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that," muttered the pig, coming over and crowding as close to Dorothy as he could. It almost seemed as if someone had heard him, for scarcely were the words out of his mouth before the dark lantern over their heads sputtered ominously and went out, leaving them in a perfectly pitch-black darkness.

"I I I felt something like this would happen," faltered Pigasus, throwing his left wing protectingly around Dorothy. "Listen! Someone is coming."

A light, sure footstep sounded in the passage, came closer, then a sudden puff of air told them that someone had opened the door.

"Remember, Piggins dear, no matter what happens, we must be brave," whispered Dorothy, trembling a little in spite of herself.

"It's hard to be brave in the dark, but I'll do my best. Here, lean on me."

And though the happenings of the next ten minutes were enough to try the courage of a dozen lions, Pigasus kept his word and never uttered a sound. As the two prisoners clung desperately together, the crystal on the center table received a sudden, shattering blow. Up spurted a perfect fountain of fire, coming down over Dorothy and Pigasus in a shower of red-hot sparks. But the sparks fell harmlessly as raindrops on the winged pig and the little girl, and after a great hiss and sputter went out, leaving the laboratory in darkness again.

Scarcely had they recovered from this shock before a second blow was struck, and this time a hundred huge, hideous, black snakes came writhing out of the crystal, their green, glittering eyes lighting up the room with a terrifying, sulphurous light. The great twisting mass grew more and more menacing, sending out its long, curving bodies like arms to encircle them. This, thought Dorothy, burying her head in Pigasus' wing, was black magic at its worst. Now she could feel the clammy coils all around her and waited breathlessly to be crushed and broken. But the cold, heavy bodies seemed powerless and without weight, and presently they, too, slipped away and vanished.

A shower of silver arrows followed the snakes and a cloud of choking green smoke the arrows. But each blow on the crystal only seemed to prove further the potency of the kiss set on Dorothy's forehead so long ago by the Good Witch of the North. And because she clung so tightly to Pigasus, he, too, came unharmed through the hair-raising ordeal. As they both, almost afraid to breathe, waited for the next blow on the dark crystal, a long, tremulous

sigh came mournfully through the darkness. "It is no use," murmured a discouraged voice, "my black magic is of no avail. Come, then, destroy me if you must, but do it quickly, and I pray you will spare my people, who have never harmed or hurt a living soul in Oz."

With a little thrill, Dorothy recognized the voice of the Black Queen, and as the dark lantern again shed its twinkling black rays over the circular apartment, Gloma rose and came calmly and rapidly toward them. Dorothy and Pigasus, who had just had their own bravery so severely tested, could not but admire the spirit and bravery of the Witch of the Black Forest. Even though she was sure she faced certain destruction, she walked proudly erect, her head flung back, her great mass of dusky hair billowing behind her.

"Stop!" cried Dorothy, on whom the Queen's dark beauty had made a deep and lasting impression. "Why should we wish to destroy you? We came through the Yellow Wood and from there into the Black Forest, but we only wished to go through as quickly as possible. We are in trouble ourselves. Did you know that Ozma of Oz, the Wizard of Oz, the four rulers of Oz, and many others have vanished? There is a false Emperor on the throne in the Emerald City, and under the magic of his enchantment all the people have forgotten Ozma ever was their Queen. Pigasus and I, escaping this enchantment, are trying to find Ozma and someone to help us restore her to power." Dorothy spoke with such earnestness and feeling, Gloma could not help believing her.

"Then then you did not come here to destroy me at all?" she exclaimed with an unhappy and embarrassed glance at her two prisoners. "Forgive me for using my magic powers, I only wanted to save myself and my foresters from obliteration."

"Oh, that's all right." Dorothy dismissed with a careless shrug the danger and discomfort of the last hour. "You thought we were going to destroy you, so, of course, you tried to destroy us first. That was fair enough, and I don't blame you, but now that we understand each other better, perhaps you will help us. Do you, yourself, remember Ozma, and is your magic powerful enough to tell us where she is?"

Seating herself in a chair near Dorothy's footstool, Gloma stared thoughtfully at the velvet carpet. "I know or remember nothing of the present history of Oz," she told them after a short silence. "At the time the Wizard of Oz ruled Oz, I ruled by royal right and inheritance the entire southern part of the Winkie Empire. Although the Wicked Witch of the East claimed dominion over the whole country, she only succeeded in bringing the central and northern parts under her control. We in the South were free, but when word came that a mortal girl had destroyed both the Witch of the East and the Witch of the West, I, being a witch, naturally supposed I would be the next one to suffer destruction. So, calling together the strongest and most faithful of my subjects, I begged them to retire with me to a safe and hidden spot where we could live in safety and tranquility far from the wars, dangers, and changing fortunes of the times. Many of my Southern Winkies cast their lot with the new order, marching off to the North, but many came with me, and retiring to this hidden forest, we cut ourselves off from all intercourse with the other Kingdoms of Oz, living the free and happy life of foresters and enjoying all the beauty and benefits of outdoor sport and activity. Of the rulers in Oz since the Wizard, I know nothing whatever."

"And were you always black?" inquired Pigasus, peering inquisitively up into Gloma's face and wondering whether the two small, black wings on each side of her forehead were as useful as his own.

"No," admitted the Queen, smiling graciously down at her plump questioner.

"That was part of our disappearing plan; in a dark forest we were so much less likely to be found or discovered, so with my knowledge of the black arts I turned myself and my subjects as black as you now see us."

"What a shame! What a pity!" Dorothy jumped up and perched cozily on the arm of the Black Queen's chair. "If you had just come to the Emerald City, we could have been friends all this while."

"Why not begin now?" smiled the Queen, putting her arm affectionately round Dorothy's waist. "And you must not be sorry for us, for here we have been perfectly happy and content, and I have grown so fond of my black forest and castle I would not change their lovely sable for all the other colors in the rainbow. But tell me quickly again all that has happened in Oz, and perhaps I can make amends for the shabby treatment you have received at our hands."

Contritely the Black Queen leaned down to pat Pigasus, and as Dorothy sketched in most of the important happenings in Oz since the reign of the Wizard, the little pig pressed closely against her side. With many interested nods and exclamations, Gloma listened, and when Dorothy described the great festival that had been planned to celebrate the discovery of Oz by mortals, how Ozma and all her most important visitors and advisers had vanished at the banquet, and a false Emperor taken possession of the palace, the Queen rose and walked solemnly over to the black crystal. But after a long look into its inky depths, Gloma turned

sadly away.

"My black magic cannot help you," she told them regretfully. "The rulers of Oz and your other friends have been enchanted by green magic, and only by green magic can they be released and restored to power. But I can assist you in other ways," added the Queen, noting the disappointed expressions on the faces of her two new friends. "One tap of my scepter will transport you to any country and here" from a drawer in the ebony table the Queen drew a small, black, round box "in this container you will find a most powerful powder of darkness. One pinch of this powder tossed into the air will cause a black cloud a mile square to envelop and totally darken a city or country. While no one in this darkened area will be able to see you, it will be perfectly possible for you to see them as clearly as in the usual daylight. In case of danger it affords a safe way of escape from the enemy. To dispel the cloud, you merely close the box."

"That ought to be just the thing to use if we ever get back to the Emerald City," observed Pigasus, scratching his left ear with his right hind paw.

"Why, we could swoop down on this Emperor, bind him fast, and tweak him by the nose before he even knew what was happening."

"Why, so we could!" beamed Dorothy, brightening up at once. "And now, though of course black is a perfectly beautiful color, could you change us back to the colors we were when we came?" Dorothy spoke timidly, for she did not want to hurt Gloma's feelings.

"As soon as you leave the forest, you will resume your natural coloring," the witch assured them with a little smile. "And where, may I ask, were you planning to go first?"

"Well," said Dorothy slowly, "I thought perhaps the countries outside of Oz might not be under this forgetting spell and that we might find in one of them a King who would lend us his army and help us to chase Skamperoo out of the Emerald City. Could you transport us as far as Ev, your Majesty?"

"As easily as I could invite you to dinner," Gloma assured them with an energetic little nod, "and I hope you will not only have dinner but rest yourselves before you start again on your dangerous journey."

"Pegasus Pegasus, did you hear that? She can transport us all the way to Ev! Didn't I tell you we might find a good witch in this forest? Now everything will be all right!"

"So glad we met and got acquainted, You're not so black as you are painted!" chuckled Pegasus, breaking into rhyme from sheer good humor and relief.

"And did I hear your Majesty invite us to dinner?"

"You certainly did," said Gloma, and dropping them a little bow, she swept gaily through the door.

"D'ye suppose it will be a black dinner?" whispered Pegasus, trotting briskly along beside Dorothy. "I've heard of light repasts, but never of dark ones. But I don't care. I'm hungry enough to eat tar pudding with cinder sauce."

"Sh-hh!" warned Dorothy with a little laugh. "She'll hear you."

CHAPTER 12

FAREWELL TO THE BLACK FOREST

Although the dinner in the Black Castle was as dark a repast as Pegasus had predicted, never had he or Dorothy dined more royally or partaken of more delicate fare. The black bean soup was followed by a black fish course,

then came the dark meat of some superbly cooked fowl, "probably cinder-roosters," as Pigasus remarked in one of his humorous asides. The licorice was the most delicious of the vegetables, though the black asparagus and potatoes were appetizing, too. Black bread was served with the black grape salad and plum cake with black frosting with the black ices and blackberryade. The members of Gloma's household, now that their fear of Dorothy had been explained away, proved so interesting and merry, the time simply flew. The black lace frocks of the women and children and the soft leather suits of the black foresters were simple but elegant, and the Black Queen herself so lovely just to look at her gave one a curious thrill.

General Blotz, recalled from banishment by Blackjack, the Queen's pet Jackdaw, proved a singer of no mean ability and regaled the company with many famous black ballads and hunting songs. Pigasus, too, contributed to the general fun and gaiety with some of his best songs and verses and ate so many slices of the black plum cake, Dorothy began to feel positively uneasy.

Interesting and delightful as it all was, the little girl could not help thinking of Ozma and her other unfortunate and captive friends, and as the black banjo clock in the corner of the hall struck a musical ten, she lightly touched the arm of Gloma. The Black Queen had graciously placed Dorothy beside her.

"I think we had better go now," whispered Dorothy earnestly. "If Pigasus eats any more, he'll fall asleep and we'll have to wait till morning."

Gloma smiled and nodded understandingly then, pressing Dorothy's hand for "goodbye," stole quietly off to her workshop. Dorothy tried to signal

Pegasus across the gleaming black table, but before she could catch his eye he had vanished, and she herself was whirling dizzily through space.

"Maybe it would have been better to have spent the night in the castle," mused Dorothy, spreading her arms like wings as she sailed through the air.

"I don't suppose we'll be able to see in the dark now that we are out of the Black Forest, and goodness knows where we'll come down." There was no moon, and peer about as she would, Dorothy could not even catch a glimpse of the flying pig. "Of course," Dorothy went on conversationally to herself, "we could have flown all this distance on Piggins' back, but this is quicker and less trouble, but oh, dear, I do hope he's all right." Her worry about the pink pig ended rather abruptly, for at that very moment she began to somersault over and over in a headlong drop to the ground. A painful grunt as she landed assured her of the pig's presence.

"What are you trying to do? Puncture me?" puffed Pegasus as Dorothy with an embarrassed little gasp of apology rolled off his back. "Such rudeness!" grunted her companion, scrambling to his feet with an angry snort.

"Flinging us out of her castle as if we'd been garbage. Yes, garbage," he repeated, winking rapidly.

"It was my fault," cried Dorothy, moving over to smooth out his ruffled wing feathers. "I asked her to transport us to Ev, and OH, PIGGINS!" By the light of a crooked lamp set in a crevice of the rocky path on which they found themselves, Dorothy regarded him rapturously. "You're pink again!"

"Am I? Well, that's something." Waddling closer to the lamp, Pegasus examined himself with careful attention. "You're pink, too," he said a little more pleasantly, "but these magic transportations are a bit sudden, if you ask me, and I'm not at all sure I like this spot. Where are we,

anyway?"

"Oh, it's all right, and now we don't have to travel at all. We're here,"

announced Dorothy, who had hurried on a few steps ahead.

"And where is here?" grumbled Pigasus, following pompously, more from too much plum cake than from a desire to be disagreeable.

"Why, at Kalico's Mountain!" exclaimed Dorothy, pointing excitedly to a small door in the rocky surface before them. "Now we don't have to decide between the Gnome King and the King of Ev. Since we are here, we'll try Kalico first."

"Trying him is all very well, but I hope he does not try any magic on us," yawned Pigasus, squinting sleepily up at the brass sign hung on the stout wooden door. "What does it say there?" A green lantern hung over the door, and by its flickering light Dorothy read slowly:

"Back door of the Gnome King's Underground Castle. No dogs, babies or chickens allowed. No gold fish wanted. No peddlers or snailsmen need apply. Keep out and stay out. This means YOU."

"Oh, that's all right, laughed Dorothy as Pigasus looked rather alarmed at the sternly worded notice. "We're not babies or chickens or goldfish, and Kalico's a friend of mine. Come on!" Lifting the knocker and smiling confidently, Dorothy knocked three times on the Gnome King's back door.

CHAPTER 13

IN KALICO'S CASTLE

"What is it, Shoofenwaller?" Kalico, the thin and gray little King of the Gnomes, peered impatiently down from the great carved gem-studded rock that

served him for a throne. "Shoo, go away. You know this is my hour for retiring! Go away, I tell you! And if you never come back, it will still be too soon."

"Yes, but your MAJESTY!" While obediently backing toward the door, the King's Royal Chamberlain extended his arms imploringly. "Something has come up; the Long-Eared Hearer reports footsteps on the South Mountain. Two visitors are about to enter the back door of our castle."

"Visitors!" exclaimed Kalico, getting up with an impatient flounce. "At this hour! Well, tell them to go away and come back tomorrow. Here, wait a moment." As Shoofenwaller, shrugging his narrow shoulders, turned to carry out his orders, Kalico changed his mind. "Just hand me my expectacles," commanded the King crossly, "I may as well have a look at the prowling pests."

With another shrug, Shoofenwaller stepped to a small cabinet, and taking a pair of smoked glasses from the top drawer, handed them up to the King. Now Kalico's expectacles were very useful, enabling him to see who was coming before they arrived, and clapping them hurriedly on his thin nose, he stared intently off into space. At what he saw, the King's expression changed from irritation to vague uneasiness. "Botheration!" he muttered morosely. "It's one of those mortals from the Emerald City. Why can't those girls stay home? Always poking their noses into other people's affairs and trying to save somebody from something."

"Which one is it?" asked Shoofenwaller, blinking.

"It's Dorothy," sighed Kalico, taking off his expectacles and putting them absently into his pocket, "and there's a queer kind of winged pig with her. A pig with wings, mind you. Rooks and rockets! Wonder what they want."

"Why not find out?" suggested Shoofenwaller reasonably.

"No! No, not tonight," Kalico waved his hands determinedly. "Just conduct them to the red guest cave, Shoofenwaller, and bring them to me in the morning." With a stiff bow, the Royal Chamberlain backed out the door and pattered away to admit the visitors.

"And about time, too," thought Dorothy as the rock door opened cautiously and the little crooked Gnome thrust out his head.

"In the name of King Kalico the First, I hereby welcome you to Gnome Man's Land," began Shoofenwaller pompously.

"Oh, that's all right," yawned Pigasus wearily, "what we want is a place to sleep, and remember no trickery!" he added sharply as the Gnome stood aside so that they could enter the narrow rock passageway.

"I suppose your Highness comes on a matter of state?" remarked Shoofenwaller, turning from Pigasus with an involuntary grimace. Pigs reminded him of ham; ham reminded him of eggs; and eggs were immediate death and destruction to gnomes.

"Well, yes," admitted Dorothy, adjusting her step to the short, crooked legs of the King's little Counselor. "What I really need is an army!"

"An army?" groaned Shoofenwaller, realizing what bad news this would be for his master. "Our army?"

"Oh, let's talk about all that in the morning," wheezed Pigasus as Dorothy briskly nodded her head in answer to Shoofenwaller's question. The pink pig was taking sleepy sidelong squints at the elegantly excavated and gem-encrusted corridors of the Gnome King's underground dwelling.

"Just what his Majesty suggested," muttered the Chamberlain, sweeping open a

red iron door with a ruby knob. "I trust you will be comfortable here and rest well. If your Highness wishes a cup of Kalicocoa, or your friend a mud pie or pudding, just ring the bell. Goodnight, Princess! Goodnight, er, er PIG!"

"Sa-hay, I resent that!" Pigasus cocked his ears belligerently as the King's crooked little messenger bowed himself out the door. "Did you notice the way he said 'pig,' Dorothy?"

"Yes," said Dorothy with a little yawn, "I did, but then all gnomes are sassy, and you'll have to get used to them. If Kalico helps us, that's all we care about."

Pigasus nodded rather grimly. "I suppose this is what you call getting down to bed rock," he murmured, looking around the red-rock apartment with his amused blue stare. "Hope the beds aren't rock, too." Punching a red sofa experimentally and finding it surprisingly soft, the pink pig jumped up and settled himself cozily among the cushions. Pigasus had lived in castles and palaces all his life and was so accustomed to comfort and luxury that without bothering to look around Kalico's richly appointed guest cavern he closed his eyes and fell asleep. Dorothy, tiptoeing through a curtain into an adjoining red-rock cavern that served as a bedroom, undressed quickly and putting out the ruby lamps slid thankfully between the red silk sheets and was soon as soundly asleep as Pigasus.

They were just having breakfast, served by two small gnomes in their red sitting-cave, when Shoofenwaller came hurrying in to announce that Kalico was ready and waiting to see them. Earlier the Gnome King and his Chamberlain had discussed the possible purposes of Dorothy's visit, and Kalico had been extremely annoyed to learn that she wanted to borrow his

army.

"And you will lend it to her, all our hundred thousand trained Gnomes Yoemen?" questioned Shoofenwaller anxiously.

"What else can I do?" Kalico snapped his little gray eyes unhappily.

"Remember, it was Dorothy who stole the former Gnome King's magic belt and really was the means of my becoming King."

"That's so," muttered Shoofenwaller, pulling his ear reflectively. "But why not use a little strategy in this conference, King? Why not pretend to help her and at the same time safeguard your own interests? Lending our army is a dangerous experiment. Suppose an enemy threatened us while our fighting forces were in the Emerald City? Anything could happen. Put her off, make excuses," urged Shoofenwaller craftily. This suggestion fell in exactly with the Gnome King's wishes, and curious to know what really had brought Dorothy to his castle, he sent his little Chamberlain hurrying off to bring her to the throne room.

"And now for a little Kalicoaxing," sniffed Pigasus, waddling unconcernedly along beside Dorothy under magnificent arches, over artificial terraces and rock gardens, gazing down long vistas of yet-unmined shafts where hundreds of gnomes worked busily with picks and shovels to further enrich the already enormously rich and powerful little Metal Monarch. Kalico, as they entered the beautifully furnished and lavishly carved cave that he used for a throne room, came hurrying to meet them.

"So charming of you to come all this way just to see me," murmured the Gnome King, taking both of Dorothy's hands in his own and bowing graciously as she introduced Pigasus. "Always delighted to entertain a Princess from the

Court of her Royal Highness, Ozma of Oz!"

"Oh, Kalico, then you DO remember her! Oh, please, dear Kalico, will you help us to find her?"

"Find her? Why, what under the earth do you mean? Is Ozma lost?" Kalico's long face at Dorothy's excited greeting grew visibly longer, and after the little girl had explained the disappearance of Ozma and the others, the enchantment of all the people in Oz, and the coming of Skamperoo to the Emerald City, Kalico climbed wearily back on his throne and sat down.

"This this is shocking!" faltered Kalico, mopping his forehead with a long, gray cobweb, "And just what do you and this this pig intend to do about it?"

"What do YOU intend to do about it?" Rather tired of being called a pig, Pigasus planted all four feet and stared defiantly up at the perturbed Metal Monarch.

"Well er that is er I don't see that it is MY affair at all!" mumbled Kalico with a rueful nod of his head. "Anyone powerful enough to conquer Ozma and Oz would pay small attention to opinions of mine."

"But we don't want your opinions," stated Pigasus bluntly. "What we want is your army and any magic you can conveniently spare!"

"Please, Kalico, do help us," begged Dorothy, running up the carved rock steps of the throne and seating herself coaxingly on the arm. "With all your thousands of gnomes and many magic powers, we can certainly drive Skamperoo out of the Emerald City."

"Well, of course," sighed Kalico, flattered by Dorothy's reference to his magic powers, "I'll do what I can, but if what you say is true, it will take more than one army to reconquer Oz." As he said this, Kalico looked

across at Shoofenwaller, and the little Chamberlain, well pleased with his master's strategy, gave him an encouraging wink. "I tell you what I'll do."

Kalico crossed his legs and regarded Dorothy through half-closed eyes. "If you find another King willing to send his army into Oz, I will also send mine. Remember, even Ozma's closest friends and retainers have forgotten her, and the entire population, now fully convinced Skamperoo is their rightful ruler, will rise to oppose us."

"Yes, yes, but have you no magic that will dispel this wicked enchantment or help us to locate our friends and sovereigns?" demanded Pigasus, not wholly satisfied with the Gnome King's offer.

"Gnome magic may be of no use in this case; nevertheless, I will send for my wizard and see what can be done." Remembering their last experience with magic, Dorothy stepped down from Kalico's throne and seated herself quietly on the pink pig's back, and Pigasus, grunting with relief, squinted suspiciously at the small, ugly Wizard of the Underworld who presently came shuffling into the royal presence chamber. As quickly as possible, Kalico explained to the Wizard all the dire happenings in Oz.

"Do you think our magic spyglass could locate Ozma²⁰ and her missing friends and associates or tell us whether they have been utterly and completely destroyed?" demanded the Gnome King gravely.

Potaroo, the King's magician, stood pulling his straggly whiskers for several moments after Kalico had finished speaking, then he stamped four times on the flagged floor with his right foot. Almost instantly four gnome wise men in peaked hats came into the throne room wheeling a huge telescope before them. Dorothy and Pigasus, prickling with suspense and terror,

watched the Wizard screw his eye to the end of the twisting spyglass. After several snorts and surprised exclamations, Potaroo straightened up. "The missing Ozians and the Wizard of Ev are hidden away in Thunder Mountain," he stated in a hoarse whisper. An electric little silence followed Potaroo's disclosure, and as no one uttered a sound, the wizard continued, "As the spyglass is now pointing north, I believe you will find Thunder Mountain in that direction, but I must warn you that it will be a long and exceedingly dangerous journey."

"Danger? Well, what do we care for that? Quick somebody, fetch me my coat my hat"

"This hardly seems a time for jokes and verses," murmured Kalico, looking at Dorothy in mild disapproval.

"She has to make verses and rhymes when she rides me. I'm a poetry pig, and a lucky star guides me!" grunted Pigasus, too overcome by the wizard's awful news to realize he was speaking in verse himself.

"Oh, what difference does it make?" cried Dorothy, jumping quickly off his back. "We must go to Thunder Mountain at once. Pigasus can fly there."

"Here, here, not in such a hurry," exclaimed Kalico, secretly delighted at the prospect of being so easily rid of his troubles. "We must pack you a lunch basket, and tell me, Potaroo, have you any magic that will make the journey less dangerous for these brave young adventurers?"

"M-magic?" stuttered Potaroo, his eyes growing glassy at the mere thought of parting with any of his magic treasures. "Well, er, I could lend them a box of my famous triple-action stumbling blocks. They will overthrow any enemy, no matter how numerous."

"Splendid!" beamed Kalico, rubbing his hands briskly together, "And don't

forget, in the course of your journey north, if you find a King willing to lend his army, my army also will be ready and at your service."

"Oh, Kalico, how kind you are!" Running up the steps of the throne again, Dorothy gave the Gnome King an impulsive hug.

"Come on, COME on!" squealed Pigasus, who had seen the various winks between Kalico and Shoofenwaller and was convinced that the little Gnome King was doing as little as he possibly could. "Give us our lunch and our stumbling blocks and we'll be off, and I must say they'll be an enormous help when we reach Thunder Mountain." Spreading his wings, Pigasus began to fly in angry circles round the Gnome King's head.

"Humph, pork's going up!" sniffed Shoofenwaller as he hurried away to see about packing the lunch basket.

"He ought to be dried, smoked and salted," muttered Potaroo, going sulkily off to fetch the blocks. Dorothy, in earnest consultation with Kalico, heard neither of these remarks, and when a few moments later the two returned with two boxes and Dorothy's hat and coat, she thanked them politely, called Pigasus down from a rocky ledge where he had flown, and climbed happily on his back. Then Pigasus, not giving her time for any lengthy farewells, zipped through the tunneled caverns and corridors of the Gnome King's Underground Dominions and burst thankfully out the back door of South Mountain.

"Now let's see, which way is north?" mused Pigasus, twirling his curly tail around like a propeller. "All we have to do is to fly north to Thunder Mountain, unlock its thunder bolts, restore the rulers of Oz, toss tumbling blocks at all enemies, raise a grand army, and then, THEN King Kalico will

help us. Isn't it just too magnificent!"

"Why, Piggins, how mean of you, surely you know The Gnome King's our friend, don't you like Kalico?"

"No!" said Pigasus fiercely, hurling himself into the air.

"Well, anyway, we're better off than we were before," thought Dorothy after several rhymed attempts to draw Pigasus into a conversation. "At least we now know where Ozma is and have two kinds of magic and the promise of an army. Really, we're getting on quite fast." But perhaps had she seen the King and his Chamberlain nodding their heads like two little China mandarins as she and Pigasus left the throne room, she would not have felt so cheerful.

"That's the last we'll ever see of her," chuckled Shoofenwaller, dropping a dried lizard instead of a lump of sugar into his tea. (Gnomes always flavor their tea with lizards.) "No one yet has ever come safely back from Thunder Mountain. But what about this new Emperor of Oz?"

"Oh, that will be all right!" Kalico waved one hand airily. "I would much rather have a man on the throne of Oz. Ozma is always involving me in wars or demanding the rights of smaller Kingdoms, so long may she stay in Thunder Mountain and long Skamperoo rule in Oz!"

"Long live the Emperor!" echoed Shoofenwaller, and clicking their teacups gaily together, the two bad little Gnomes drained to the last drop their black and bitter tea. And we should not be too hard on Kalico, I suppose, for like all the dwellers under the earth, his heart is gray and flinty as the rock that forms his cavern, the blood in his veins cold and sluggish as the leaden waters of the underground rivers that wind sullenly through his dark domain.

CHAPTER 14

THE EMPEROR OF OZ

The same morning Dorothy wakened in the rustic summer house of the Winkie farmer, Skamperoo opened his eyes upon the unaccustomed grandeur of Ozma's Royal Palace. The banquet had lasted till long after three o'clock, then still chuckling and yawning, he had waved goodnight to his hilarious and amiable subjects and led Chalk off to bed. Twenty footmen with twenty lighted tapers preceded him to Ozma's own apartment, but dismissing this as too plain and simple, he had taken the immense green guest suite across the hall.

Chalk would have much preferred a stall in the Royal Stable with the other four-footed members of the castle party, but Skamperoo would not hear of such a separation. He wanted his white wishing horse close at hand, not only because through him and the magic emeralds he could satisfy every wish, but because for the first time in his long, lazy, selfish life he had found someone he liked better than himself. In Skamperoo's eyes Chalk was absolutely perfect, and as his own wish had brought the golden-maned charger into being, he felt proud and important as a parent with his first child.

After a few regretful sniffs out of the window, a few short turns up and down their immense and elegant sleeping apartment, Chalk leaped lightly on one of the large, green beds and settled himself gracefully for the night.

Covering Chalk tenderly with a green satin quilt, Skamperoo hastily disrobed, and clutching his precious necklaces, climbed wearily into the

other bed. There, without even stopping to wish himself goodnight, he fell into a deep and tranquil slumber. Indeed, both, in spite of the strangeness of their surroundings, slept soundly till morning.

About eight o'clock, Chalk, lifting his head from the embroidered pillow, looked indulgently across at the new Emperor of Oz. Sitting up in bed, Skamperoo was busily counting the gems in his three magic chains.

"Ho, throw those silly beads away!" advised the white horse, jumping out of bed with a gay toss of his golden mane. "You have nothing else to wish for, Kingaling, nothing more at all! M-mmm, this green carpet looks good enough to eat, but I've a fancy to nibble the clover in Your Majesty's garden while it is still fresh with dew."

"Say it again," begged Skamperoo, closing his eyes and clasping himself blissfully around the middle.

"Your Majesty's garden! Your Majesty's Palace, Your Majesty's Kingdom of Oz!" whinnied the white horse, rising on his hind legs and pirouetting round with mischievous little prances. "But come, Emp! What are your wishes for today? I think we will have to use the necklaces after all. You must certainly have some new clothes. It would never do to appear this morning in the suit you wore last night. You had better have some sleeping garments, too. I've a notion that Emperors do not sleep in their raw hides like horses." Skamperoo, giggling self-consciously, dragged the satin sheets up to his chin, for to tell the truth, he had arrived in the Emerald City with only one suit to his back, and an extremely shabby one at that.

"Maybe I'd better change my face, too," he murmured, "to go with all this, you know." Dreamily Skamperoo waved his hands about, and then, leaning forward, slipped the chains over Chalk's ear.

"What's the matter with the face you have?" demanded Chalk, gazing fondly at the red, rotund countenance of his Master. "I like you just as you are, and if you change I wouldn't even know you, but I'll tell you what you can wish after you've ordered yourself some new clothes wish yourself a seasoned rider, and then we can go far and wide, Kingaling, far and wide at a furious gallop and none shall say us nay hey, hey!"

"And none shall say us nay," trilled Skamperoo, rolling out of bed, covers and all. To wish himself fifty jewel-encrusted robes with boots, crowns, and all the undergarments to go with them, fifty splendid sleeping robes, and fifty suits of riding clothes took but a moment. He and Chalk could hear them landing with little thuds on the hangars in the many closets as Skamperoo finished speaking. Then, being naturally lazy, the new Emperor wished that he had already had his bath and was dressed in his green riding clothes. So immediately he was, and winking at his clever assistant adviser, he next wished himself the best rider in Oz. Then, taking back his necklaces, he buttoned them carefully in a little pocket over his heart and went over to the mirror to have a look at himself.

"How about this governing stuff?" puffed the self-made Emperor, turning this way and that to get a good view of his new clothes.

"Oh, I shouldn't bother about governing," answered Chalk carelessly. "A well-governed country like this should be able to run itself for a few weeks. By that time we'll be ready for more serious matters, but right now I'm all for enjoying myself. A splendid idea, that, of putting all the rulers and the Wizard and his magic out of the way. The rest of your court and subjects are exceedingly sensible and jolly, and if we are pleasant and

sensible too, everything will be `What ho and so cozy!' So let's go below and start our first day of emperoaring!" Impatiently Chalk pranced away toward the door.

"You're sure I look all right?" asked Skamperoo with another anxious squint at his reflection. "Seems to me I'm a bit fat."

"Oh, don't worry about that," said Chalk, rolling his eyes wickedly. "Come along, come along, and I'll soon shake some of that fat off you. Up with you, Kingaling, and let's to our oats!" To his delight and pleasure, Skamperoo had not the slightest trouble mounting, and once in the saddle he felt perfectly at home, even when Chalk bounded through the door, took the long, circular steps between a canter and a gallop, and ran madly three times round the Royal gardens.

On fine days Ozma always had breakfast in her private garden, and it being an especially fine day, the palace servants without thought or question had placed the royal table under the trees. It was still fairly early, and none of the guests or members of the household were down, but this did not spoil Skamperoo's excellent appetite at all. Ordering Chalk a breakfast of oats, bran and quartered apples, he seated himself gaily at the head of the table. The green riding hat, set well over one ear, became him vastly well, and Chalk, regarding him proudly from the foot of the table, thought him every inch an Emperor, even if round the waist there were a good many too many inches.

"I wish Pinny Penny could see you now," sighed the horse, sinking contentedly back on his haunches, "and how I should have enjoyed seeing Matiah's face when he finally discovered you and the necklaces were gone. By the way, perhaps we should do something about Matiah."

"Pinny Penny will attend to him," said Skamperoo, popping a huge cherry into his mouth and nodding his head reassuringly. "I'll wager Pinny Penny sent the fellow packing the moment he found himself King. Wonder how Pinny is making out, anyway?"

"But suppose Matiah should follow us here?" went on Chalk. Having been in existence only two days, he knew little of Oz or geozophy.

"He can't come here," Skamperoo told him triumphantly. "There's a deadly desert between Skampavia and Oz that no one in my father's lifetime or in mine has ever crossed, that is with the exception of ourselves, and we were wished across, which doesn't count." Then, as four footmen with heaping trays appeared, he winked at Chalk, and the white horse lapsed into a thoughtful silence.

And Skamperoo had been perfectly correct in his conjectures about Pinny Penny. When, with a resounding clunk, the King's gold crown had fallen upon the astonished Prime Minister, his head had gone entirely through so he was forced to wear it much as a dog wears a collar. But even so, he was not slow to realize the significance of this odd happening or the power it brought with it. Gripping the scepter, which had forced itself into his hand, he rushed into the throne room to find out what strange whim of his Master had made him acting King of the Realm. A glance around the throne room was enough to show him that Skamperoo was not there, and when he saw Matiah sitting so unconcernedly in the book alcove, a sudden rage and conviction seized him. Whatever had happened, Matiah was to blame.

"Leave this palace at once!" shouted Pinny Penny, stamping first one foot and then the other. "At once, do you hear, or I'll call out the guard!"

Matiah, still deep in the History of Oz, looked up in astonishment, and when he saw the little Prime Minister wearing Skamperoo's crown round his neck and brandishing his scepter, he gave a perfect bellow of anger and dismay.

"Where's the King?" he roared, looking wildly around the throne room, "And why are you wearing his crown? Where's Skamperoo where're the necklaces?"

"Ask yourself!" raged Pinny Penny, shaking the scepter threateningly.

"Everything was quiet and peaceful till you and your necklaces arrived at this palace; there's some magic trickery about them and about you. Don't think I was fooled by that horse story, a horse does not appear out of the air. Well, now the King's gone, the horse is gone, and unless you are gone in ten seconds I'll have you thrown out of the window. Ten seconds, do you hear? This crown and scepter came to me through no wish or choice of my own, but since they did come to me, I AM THE KING! And I intend to rule this country. My first official act will be to rid myself of your filthy presence. Now then, start walking, merchant, and don't stop till you reach the border. Twenty guards will follow to see you safely out of the country."

"You wait till Skamperoo hears about this!" blustered Matiah, backing away in alarm from the determined little Prime Minister. "I'm more important to him than anyone else."

"Then why aren't you with him?" inquired Pinny Penny shrewdly. "No, wherever he's gone, he has gone without you. I am the King, and I do not need you, so be off!" Clapping his hands, Pinny gave a sharp command to the guards who came hurrying in answer to his summons. Retiring rapidly to escape the

tips of their sharp spikes, Matiah sullenly began his long march. It was nightfall by the time the little company reached the edge of Skampavia. Here, in a wilderness of rock and rubble, the guardsmen left him with food enough for a couple of days and stern warnings never to return to Skampavia. Far to the west the miserable merchant could see the comforting lights of Merryland, but he had no desire to go there or east to the Kingdom of Ix. Instead, he stared hopelessly across the wilderness to where the heaving sands of the Deadly Desert gleamed like molten silver in the moonlight.

How had that rascally monarch ever escaped without his seeing him? How could he ever safely cross the Deadly Desert and hope to reach Oz? How had Skamperoo, who seemed so dumb and foolish, ever discovered the secret of using the magic emeralds when he himself had failed to do so? How? How? How? Crouched on a flat rock, munching one of the sandwiches left by the guards, Matiah scowled evilly across the grim desert, his thoughts as treacherous and shifting as its deadly sands.

CHAPTER 15

THE DOONERS!

All day, with only a short pause for lunch, Pigasus had flown north, Dorothy keeping a sharp lookout for Thunder Mountain or mountains of any sort, but the wild, desolate country through which they were flying was flat, desert-like and apparently perfectly uninhabited.

"A fine, healthy chance we have of finding an army here!" snorted Pigasus as the afternoon drew to a hot, weary close. "And what we'll do when we find

Thunder Mountain I haven't the faintest notion, have you? Even if I butt my nose black, blue and blunt, and you break both knuckles beating on its rocky exterior, how can we ever hope to enter such a place, much less release our unfortunate sovereigns? I told you Kalico was a scoundrel; I'll wager he's sent us on a wild-goose chase just to get us out of the way."

"Ah, don't say I told you so, There's always some way, you know," said Dorothy, almost as downhearted as Pigasus, though she would not admit it. The pink pig, rather ashamed of himself, flew for several miles without saying anything, then, in rather a gruff voice, he called Dorothy's attention to the changing nature of the scenery below.

"Notice the hills?" he snorted more hopefully. "Maybe there is a mountain, after all, but the sun's going down, and I'm ready to sink myself, so let's descend and see whether we can find a soft rock on which to lay our heads."

"Not hills, dunes!" cried Dorothy, bouncing off as soon as Pigasus touched the earth. "Sand dunes; we must be near the coast and the Nonestic Ocean."

"It does smell salty," agreed Pigasus, sniffing the air eagerly, "but suppose we save the ocean for tomorrow; my feet ache, my wings ache, and I'm hollow as a drum."

"Then we'll have supper," decided Dorothy sensibly. So seating themselves comfortably with their backs against a dune, the two weary explorers finished up all the cold meat, fruit, pie and sandwiches Shoofenwaller had packed up for them. After a long, wistful sniff into the box convinced him there was not another crumb, Pigasus folded his wings and lay down in the soft sand at the foot of the dune, giving only indistinct grunts and snorts to Dorothy's questions and observations. Finally, getting no answer at all, Dorothy discovered he was asleep. The regular rise and fall of the pink

pig's sides, the soft, drowsy singing of the west wind lulled Dorothy into a pleasant state of dreaminess, and presently, with her head comfortably pillowed on the pig's plump shoulder, she fell asleep, too.

It must have been hours later when terrified squeals from Pigasus and the patter of a hundred hurrying feet made her start up in alarm. Still only half awake, she was startled to find herself and Pigasus surrounded by a horde of savage-looking sandmen. In the pale and watery moonlight they looked like creatures out of some very bad dream. Their bodies were roughly moulded of sand, their eyes strangely green and phosphorescent, while their hair, rising like beach grass from their pointed heads, waved about their lumpy faces.

Clutching the basket that contained her small store of clothing, the Black Witch's powder of darkness, and Potaroo's box of stumbling blocks, Dorothy pressed back against the dune. Her first idea of leaping on the pig's back and bidding him fly was useless. Pigasus lay helplessly on his side, his wings and legs bound tightly with long strands of tough, strong seaweed. Thankful to find that she at least was free, Dorothy went a step closer to her struggling, squealing, furious little comrade. As she did so, a perfect shower of sand balls came flying toward her. The sharp sting of the sandmen's missiles not only awoke her completely, but goaded her into instant and angry action.

"Stop that! Stop that at once!" she cried, stamping her foot indignantly, but her words only brought another shower of sand balls down on their heads.

"You have dared to invade the sacred domain of the Dooners," yelled the

rasping voice of the leader, rattling a long string of seashells he wore round his neck. "And therefore you shall be sand balled, sand bagged and made into sandwiches for the sand crabs!"

If the Dooner had not looked so wild and dangerous, his foolish threat might have been amusing, but as he and his bandy-legged sandmen came leaping forward, Pigasus gave a squeal of sheer terror, and Dorothy, raising the basket over her head, hurled it with all her might into the midst of the advancing army. The effect was immediate and astonishing. Cowering down beside Pigasus and expecting to be seized or trampled on, Dorothy saw the first line of Dooners going down like a row of tenpins, then all the others began tumbling and tripping and falling in heaps. No sooner would a sandman rise than he would instantly tumble down again, and their squalls and screeches of rage were so piercing Dorothy put both hands over her ears. "It's the blocks," wheezed Pigasus, managing to lift his head a few inches. "Kalico's stumbling blocks are flying like fur and fury. Now if they just keep 'em down for a while longer, we might get away."

Dorothy, peering sharply into the midst of the tumbling Dooners, saw the fifty magic squares released from their box when she flung her basket, fairly exploding with activity, and scramble up as they would after each tumble, the sandmen could not advance an inch, or even manage to stand erect. The leader, attempting to crawl forward on his hands and knees, was caught by a dozen of the whirling missiles and rolled back like a log among his churning comrades.

"Hurray! Three cheers for Kalico!" puffed Pigasus. "Quick, my girl, see if you can untie these wretched seaweeds, and we'll be flying and be off in a pigwhistle."

"I had a pair of scissors in my basket, if it hasn't fallen out, and anyway I'm not going without my things," declared Dorothy, now quite bold since the enemy had been overcome by magic. And in spite of the pig's anxious squeals of warning, she rushed forward, grabbed her basket and began picking up her scattered belongings, noting with a sigh of relief that the box containing the powder of darkness was still closed. With the scissors, still safe in the little pocket in the side of the basket, she soon clipped the seaweed trusses from Pigasus, and clasping the basket in her arms climbed swiftly on his back. Pigasus, without one backward glance, rose straight into the air and again headed north. Dorothy, peering fearfully over his left wing, saw the Dooners spring suddenly to their feet and then, like frightened prairie dogs, disappear into many holes in the sand.

Funny, mused Dorothy, that they had not noticed these openings before. Funny that the Dooners had stopped stumbling as soon as she and Pigasus had taken to the air. Funny but then, everything was funny. Right in the middle of her conjectures, the box of stumbling blocks, now closed and tied with a red ribbon, dropped "plink" into the middle of her basket.

"Someone's throwing things," gasped Pigasus, flapping his wings a bit faster and looking rather wildly over his shoulder.

"No, just our box of stumbling blocks," yawned Dorothy. Now that the excitement was over, she felt dreadfully tired, and even the sight of the Nonestic Ocean rippling and gleaming a few yards ahead did not arouse or interest her.

It did not interest Pigasus either. He was far from pleased to find himself so near the coast. "I don't like this, I don't like this at all," muttered

the pig, perking up his ears and wiggling his nose rapidly. "We've flown straight north, and instead of striking Thunder Mountain, we strike the sea, and how could a mountain be in the middle of the sea?"

"There are mountains on islands, and I have a notion There are plenty of islands out there in the ocean," said Dorothy sleepily, recalling the days she had studied geography in the United States.

"Take Japan, for instance, over there Mountains are simply everywhere!"

"I don't care if they are," answered Pigasus fiercely. "I won't go to Japan, and I'll not go a wing's breadth over this ocean tonight, islands or no islands. Sa-hay! There's the North Star to our left, so we're not going north at all. We're off our course, that's what we are!"

"North Star? North Star, of course we are!" murmured Dorothy with a drowsy nod.

"You're asleep," scolded Pigasus in a worried voice. "I'd better land."

"If you land too soon, you'll strike a dune," warned Dorothy with another yawn. And after a quick glance below and convinced they were still over the Dooners' domain, Pigasus spread his wings a bit wider and swung along the coast looking carefully for a safe place to land and spend the rest of the night. He was so busy squinting downward that he never saw the long, curious, tube-like shadow shooting after him with incredible accuracy and speed. A terrific blast of air as it rushed by them on the right was his first warning of danger. Dorothy, too, caught unaware, gave a faint shriek as an immense, snake-like body curved back and began to coil round and round them like some gigantic air serpent.

"It is a snake!" thought poor Dorothy as Pigasus clung helplessly in the little circle of air left in the center of its coils. Neither spoke, for

truly there was nothing to say or do. Then just as the suspense grew too awful to be endured, the monster opened its mouth, and Dorothy, backing as far along the pig's back as she possibly could, almost lost her balance.

Instead of a tongue or long tusks, out popped the head and shoulders of a little old man no larger than Dorothy herself.

"Pardon me," he murmured politely, "I was looking for a sea serpent."

"Do I look like a sea serpent?" snorted Pigasus in a quivering voice, for he was still half choked from shock and fright. "If you and that monster you're riding are looking for a sea serpent, go ahead look for one, but leave honest travelers alone!"

"Monster?" exclaimed the little man in a hurt voice. "Oh, I say now, you have us all wrong. This is no monster, this is the long, strong, flexible, stretchable, SHOOTING TOWER of my private castle, and I myself am Bitty Bit, the Seer of Some Summit."

In the short silence that followed Bitty Bit's astonishing announcement, Dorothy, examining more closely the tube-like coils encircling herself and Pigasus, saw that they really were of stone with rubber-like sections between. What she had taken for a mouth was really a window. With his elbow resting on the ledge, Bitty Bit was regarding them fixedly.

"Well, even if you are a seer and have a shooting tower," grunted Pigasus, gathering courage as he went along, "there is no reason for you to come towering over us this way!"

"But a seer must be constantly looking for things," explained Bitty Bit, spreading his hands expansively. "That, you know, is his business. I am always looking for something, and tonight it happens to be sea serpents."

"Sorry to disappoint you," said Pigasus more mildly, "but since we are not sea serpents, perhaps you'll be good enough to unwind your tower. As it happens, I have a little looking to do myself. As a matter of fact, when you and your tower overtook us, I was searching for a safe place for this young Princess and myself to spend the night."

"Look no more!" begged Bitty Bit, leaning so far over the sill Dorothy involuntarily put out her hand to save him from falling. "You shall both spend the night in my castle. COME!" Grasping Dorothy by one hand and Pigasus by one wing, the little seer with superhuman strength for one so small and wrinkled dragged them both through the open window of his shooting tower.

CHAPTER 16

THE SEER OF SOME SUMMIT

Since coming to Oz, Dorothy had traveled in many strange ways, but to find herself shooting through the midnight sky in Bitty Bit's tower was surely the oddest of all. Both she and Pigasus stared from the window in wide-eyed wonder as the tower uncoiled and started shrinking rapidly backward.

"We may as well go home at once," observed Bitty Bit, rubbing his little hands briskly together. "You are so much more interesting than sea serpents, and I can easily look for sea serpents some other night. Now don't be alarmed when we bump."

"Bump?" repeated Dorothy rather nervously.

"Of course," the sage told her calmly. "As I go forward, the tower stretches out in any direction I wish to go; when I return, it shrinks, contracts, and retires within itself like a telescope, and by the time we reach the

castle it is no larger than an ordinary tower. Mm better hold on to something, we're almost there!"

Running around the circular room a few feet from the wall was a gold railing. Pigasus had just time to seize it with one hand (sic hand?) when Bitty Bit's tower with a resounding crash snapped back, but up to a vertical position, so that what had been the floor of the little room became the east wall and the window a skylight. Dorothy and Pigasus, describing a complete circle on the bar, landed in a more-or-less upside-down position on what had been the back wall. "That's why I have it cushioned," explained the seer, who also had executed a neat somersault. Hopping up as if landing on his head was a perfectly usual and ordinary occurrence, Bitty Bit opened a trap door and motioned for Dorothy and Pigasus to follow him down a long, winding stair.

"These magic contraptions will be the death of me," wheezed Pigasus, picking himself up with a groan. The cushioned floor had made his fall painless, but he was considerably jolted and upset from the shock, or rather the series of shocks that had so far punctuated their evening.

"But if he's a seer," whispered Dorothy, recovering her basket and trotting eagerly after Bitty Bit, "he ought to be able to help us a"

"Bitty Bit," sniffed the pink pig. "Well, if he'll just help me to a bed, I'll be satisfied!" And grunting and grumbling, he clumped sleepily down the stairs behind Dorothy. The room into which the stone stairway led them was evidently the cozy and comfortable study of the comical little seer. Its walls were of oak, lined from floor to ceiling with books, and all its furnishings were tan or brown. Dorothy considered this extremely suitable,

as Bitty Bit himself looked like a very wise and merry Brownie. On his little round head was a round cap with a yellow quill, and he wore a brown, wrinkled robe rather like a monk's, tied tightly round the waist with a yellow cord. His bright, black, sharp little eyes danced with good humor and interest in his suntanned, honest, little face.

While Pigasus stood sleepily and somewhat disapprovingly on the hearth rug, Dorothy sank into a snug brown armchair and looked expectantly up at their singular host.

"No, no, not a word," begged Bitty Bit, raising his hand pleadingly.

"Remember, I am the Seer of Some Summit, a seer who can see and foresee; a seer who can tell and foretell. Just by closing my eyes I can tell who you are, whence you came, and whither you are going."

"Fancy that, now," observed Pigasus in a mocking voice.

"You," retorted Bitty Bit, pointing a skinny brown finger at the pig, "you are a creation of my friend, the Red Jinn, whose taste for low verse I always knew would lead him into some mischief."

"Low verses?" retorted Pigasus indignantly, while even Dorothy looked a little shocked.

"Yes, low verses," insisted Bitty Bit solemnly. "You are so constructed that he who rides must rhyme and break into foolish jingles. Is this not so?"

"They may be jingles, but they are NOT low verse," protested Pigasus, flapping his ears angrily.

"Well, then, let us call them simple verses," amended Bitty Bit with a generous wave of the hand, "at least they are verses that anyone can understand, which, of course, makes them of no value whatever. People never appreciate what they can understand."

"Dorothy does," declared Pigasus, now mad enough to fly right out the window.

"Dorothy? Ah, yes, I was coming to her." Swinging around, Bitty Bit, his eyes still tightly shut, wagged his finger at the astonished little girl.

"You are the mortal girl who came to Oz by cyclone. You live in the Emerald City of Oz and are"

"Oh, tell us something we don't already know," interrupted Pigasus with a bored yawn. "Where is Ozma of Oz now; how could a scalawag Emperor steal her throne?"

"Wait! Wait! Give me time! Not a word more not a word!" panted Bitty Bit, advancing with short, dancing steps toward Dorothy. "I see a necklace," he muttered mysteriously. "One, two, three necklaces! I see a white horse and a fat, red-faced fellow wearing a small emerald crown. Great sea bass and sassafrass! Oz has been conquered, its inhabitants enchanted, its rulers banished, and the King of Skampavia sits on the throne."

"So that's where he comes from!" breathed Dorothy, forgetting Bitty Bit's request for silence. "Oh, quick, tell us more tell us more, and help us to restore Ozma and the other lost sovereigns to power!"

"I am only a seer," answered the sage, opening his eyes wide and suddenly.

"I can see and foresee, tell and foretell, but I cannot change that which has happened or is about to happen."

"But where is Ozma?" demanded Pigasus, edging closer. "If you are a seer and can see 'er, at least you can tell us where she is." In this way Pigasus hoped to check up the information given them by Potaroo, the Gnome King's

Wizard.

So again Bitty Bit closed his eyes and, pressing his fingers to his forehead, spoke: "Ozma, my old friend Jinnicky, the Wizard of Oz, a soldier with green whiskers, a purple horse, two Queens, two Kings, a Prince, the Tin Woodman, and Glinda the Good Sorceress are lying at the bottom of Lightning Lake, which is on the top of Thunder Mountain," Bitty Bit told them solemnly.

"Lightning Lake?" cried Dorothy, seizing the little seer frantically by the shoulders. "Why, then, they must be drowned, burned and destroyed altogether!"

"No, no, they are quite calm and as usual," Bitty Bit assured her hastily.

"In fact, they are, I should say, in a trance of some kind."

"But what'll we do, how'll we disenchant them or find Thunder Mountain?"

Loosing her hold on Bitty Bit, Dorothy spun round three times and then started firmly for the door.

"My shooting tower will take you to Thunder Mountain or any other place you decide you must go," promised Bitty Bit, hurrying anxiously after the little girl, "but not tonight, Dorothy, not tonight. We are all tired, and I must have time to think. The conquering of Oz is a great shock to me. I would like time to look into the matter more fully and consider all of these strange events in their proper order. This problem shall be my pillow. I'll sleep on it, my dear, and in the morning will doubtless have something helpful to suggest."

"Well, then, where're the beds?" yawned Pigasus, who heartily approved of Bitty Bit's suggestion. "Or are we to sleep on our problems, too?" At this, Bitty Bit, who seemed to find Pigasus terribly amusing, laughed right out

loud, then taking Dorothy's arm he led the way to a snug little bedroom all done in yellow. Pigasus had a gentlemanly apartment in tan next door, and both were so weary they spent little time examining their new quarters, but instead went directly to bed and to sleep.

When Dorothy wakened next morning, she looked out the window and saw Pigasus flying in slow circles round the tidy castle. Bitty Bit's brown stone palace, though small and unpretentious, perched right on top of Some Summit, and the view was so fine and the mountain air so fresh and invigorating, Dorothy, in spite of all her anxiety and worry, began to feel happy and reckless and ready for anything. With cheerful little glances round her cozy yellow room, she dressed, brushed her hair till it shone, then skipped merrily down the brown marble steps and out into the garden. The garden, really a series of sloping terraces, was bright with hardy mountain posies, with spicy sage bushes and gnarled old trees which clung like acrobats to the steep rocks and dangerous crevices. Pigasus, catching a glimpse of Dorothy seated on a smooth rock near a little waterfall, came swooping down to wish her a merry morning.

"Not a bad little palace," remarked the pig considerately. "Not a bad little palace at all, though so far as I can see there's not a manservant or a woman servant or even a ladybug about. I imagine this fellow is a hermit and from the looks of him probably lives on tobacco and snuff. What do you suppose are the chances for breakfast?"

"I don't know," said Dorothy, refusing to allow such a small matter as breakfast to dash her spirits. "Have you seen Bitty Bit this morning?"

"Yes," sniffed Pigasus, beginning to poke his nose hungrily round the roots

of a dwarf oak, "before I flew out my window I saw him going into his brown study. Seer goes into brown study. How's that for the first announcement of the day?"

"You're awful," laughed Dorothy, giving Pigasus a little push.

"No, just awfully hungry," grinned Pigasus. "Now I've been thinking"

"NO?" Stepping out from behind a sizable bush, Bitty Bit regarded the pig with an air of assumed amazement. "He says he's been thinking," he repeated, turning solemnly to Dorothy. "Must be the air up here."

"That's about all I've had," retorted Pigasus, savagely crunching an acorn between his teeth, "that and a nibble from one of your sage bushes."

"Sage bush, eh?" chuckled Bitty Bit, winking at Dorothy. "That's good, and we'll make a sage of you yet, a sausage!" he whispered in an undertone that Pigasus heard quite distinctly. "And speaking of sausage, how about breakfast?"

Though Bitty Bit's remark about the sausage still rankled, Pigasus was too hungry to let it keep him from following the seer into a small, walled garden that opened out from the larger dining hall of his castle. Here, on a small table covered with a gay yellow cloth, was assembled the most appetizing breakfast Dorothy ever had tasted. Ripe melon and apricots, cereal and eggs, tiny meat pies, pancakes and honey, hot rolls and steaming brown cocoa. There was a huge bowl of mush and cream for Pigasus and another of buttermilk, and under the soothing influence of his favorite foods, Pigasus completely forgot his annoyance, and they were soon chattering away like old friends at a Sunday School Picnic.

Bitty Bit's chef, whom the pig had overlooked in his grand tour of the palace, served them with skill and speed. No wonder Pigasus had not seen

him, for he was even smaller than his wrinkled little Master and almost completely enveloped in a great brown linen apron and tall brown cap. Dorothy could not possibly eat all the dainties pressed upon her by the kind little seer and his chef, but she nibbled at each course, and when Bitty Bit saw that neither she nor Pigasus could down another bite, he swallowed the rest of his cocoa and bounced briskly to his feet.

"Now," he cried, tossing away his gay napkin with a flourish. "Now for the Emerald City and Oz!"

"But I thought we were going to Thunder Mountain," exclaimed Dorothy, pushing back her chair so hurriedly she bumped her head on the wall.

"That," exclaimed Bitty Bit, looking over his shoulder, for he was already halfway through the door, "that will not be necessary. All we need to save the celebrities of Oz is the long-lost wishing emeralds of Lorna the Wood Nymph."

"Lorna?" coughed Pigasus, rolling out of his seat and falling a bit sideways. "For pretty sake, who's she?"

"Oh, come along!" urged Dorothy, and without wasting another second she pelted into the brown palace after Bitty Bit. With a groan Pigasus followed, and groaned again when he realized he would have to climb three flights of marble steps and a flight of stone to reach the famous shooting tower. Then, suddenly and joyfully remembering his wings, he spread them wide.

"Wings, hold me up," mumbled the pink pig stuffily, "we're carrying entirely too mush mush!" Rising rather uncertainly, he breathlessly flapped his way up to the tower room where Dorothy and Bitty Bit impatiently awaited him.

CHAPTER 17

SKAMPEROO IN OZ

In the company of Scraps, the Scarecrow, the Royal Visitors, and all the amusing members of Ozma's court, the Emperor of Oz and Chalk passed a gay and hilarious morning. The tableaux and pageants proceeded without a single hitch, and no one seemed to miss Dorothy or Pigasus at all, nor did anyone notice the omission of the carefully planned groups showing the Wizard's arrival in Oz, Dorothy's first visit to the Emerald City, or the victory of Nick Chopper over the wolves. These interesting and historical events might just as well never have happened. Notta's circus later in the afternoon went off with a bang, even without Pigasus to jump through hoops and fly round the ring waving flags while Scraps did her balance-defying acts on the trapeze and tightrope. The picnic supper was even more fun than the circus, and the fireworks, set off by Tik Tok, who was in no danger of scorching himself, the best of all. Indeed, Skamperoo's first day in the Emerald City had been so full and so interesting he had not made a single wish or once thought of his magic emeralds.

"Funny we never had jolly times like this at home," mused Skamperoo, putting out the emerald stars in the ceiling that pleasantly lighted his green apartment and burrowing happily down into his splendid green bed. "Oh, Chalk! Are you asleep there, old horse?" As no answer came from the other bed, Skamperoo let himself sink a bit deeper into the luxurious nest of silken covers and soon was asleep himself, puffing and whistling like a steamboat.

But the strange and frightful snoring of the Emperor did not seem to stop or

scare away the shadowy figure that presently came stealing into the Royal Chamber. Once, twice, three times, long skinny fingers reached out toward the thick neck of the snoring ruler of Oz. The fourth time there were three distinct little clips, and when the curving, talon-like claw withdrew, it had in its clutching grasp the three powerful wishing chains. Then, without waking the occupant of either bed, the thief stole quietly into the shadows.

Now the Scarecrow, delighted with the success of the celebration so far, had suggested a series of athletic contests and obstacle races for next day, and Skamperoo had heartily agreed to his plans. His first thought on waking was the race to be run by the straw man and himself, the Scarecrow on the wooden sawhorse, he on his splendid white charger.

"I'll wear the white leather breeches and shirt," puffed Skamperoo, bounding out of bed like a schoolboy. He had taken a shower and donned his showy riding clothes before he missed his magic emeralds. Then, all at once, as he stood before the mirror to comb his hair, he gave a loud squall of anguish. "Chalk! Chalk!" roared the distracted Emperor, racing over to the balcony and leaning so far out over the railing he nearly fell on his crown. "They're gone! They're gone! My emeralds! My necklaces! My necklaces! My emeralds!"

Now Chalk, who had risen early to nibble the clover while it was still fresh with morning dew, looked up in alarm, then as his Master's voice grew louder and louder and his gestures more spectacular and desperate, the white horse rose up on his hind legs and shook his head in violent warning and displeasure. "Hush!" he directed in a low voice. "I'll be right up."

Making his way quickly but cautiously so as not to arouse the curiosity of any of the palace servants already at work in the lower hallways, Chalk hurried up to the agitated Emperor.

"They're g-g-gone!" blubbered Skamperoo, sitting on the edge of the bed and crying like a baby. "G-g-g-gone! Now everything is ruined, and I'll have nothing left at all!"

"Well, you still have me," murmured Chalk, resting his head affectionately on Skamperoo's shoulder. "Brace up, Kingaling, and for oats sake be quiet! No one here knows about the necklaces, and until the rascal who has stolen them learns how to use them we are as safe as soap. That rascal, of course, is Matiah. Somehow he has managed to cross the Deadly Desert. Yes," Chalk shook his mane wrathfully, "I am convinced that Matiah has the necklaces, but what good are they to him when we alone know the secret that makes them work? He'll have to come to us in the end, and when he does! Hah!" Chalk expelled the air from his nose in a terrific snort. "Just let me take care of him."

"But shouldn't we give the alarm, have a search made for him, and try to recover the emeralds?"

"Let him alone," counseled the wishing horse firmly. "The thing for you to do is to sit tight on the throne of Oz. Remember, you are still the Emperor!"

"But how can I be, without those emeralds?" Skamperoo dabbed at his eyes with the satin bedsheet.

"We got along all right yesterday," said Chalk calmly. "Come, cheer up, Skamper, everything will be ALL right."

"I rather counted on beating the Scarecrow in that race this morning,"

muttered Skamperoo wistfully. "How can you run as fast as that tireless wooden creature who was magically brought to life?"

"Well, wasn't I magically brought to life?" The white horse shook his mane roguishly. "Come along, Kingaling, we'll not only win that race, but we'll have back our necklaces and chase Matiah out of Oz before we are through."

"I really believe you can do anything," sighed Skamperoo, getting almost cheerfully to his feet. "But just the same, I shall keep a sharp outlook for Matiah. He might start a revolution."

"He'll revolute pretty rapidly if I once get my heels on him," promised Chalk with a wicked grin. "Come on. Heads up, and who's afraid?" However, in spite of the white horse's valiant attempts to comfort him, Skamperoo spent a troubled and uneasy day, casting fearful glances behind him when no one was looking, searching the happy holiday crowds with haggard glances for a glimpse of the long, thin face of Matiah the merchant. Even when Chalk beat the Sawhorse in their long, exciting race through the park and the crowds cheered themselves hoarse with delight and approval, the victory was spoiled by the knowledge that somewhere in the Emerald City lurked his most dangerous and relentless foe.

Chalk, too, though he pretended to regard the matter lightly, was almost as worried as his Master and spent every free moment poking his head into doorways and peering down side streets and rearing up over walls. And while Skamperoo was having his afternoon nap, the white horse systematically searched the palace from top to bottom, even the cellar.

But in the cellar Chalk did not go quite far enough, for it was in a hollowed-out chamber under the cellar that the merchant of Skampavia was

really hidden. Here, with a goodly supply of food stolen from the pantry, Matiah had seriously settled down to work out the problem of the emerald necklace. He had meant to conceal himself in the cellar itself, but when his foot brushed against an iron ring in the floor, he had lifted it up and discovered to his delight and satisfaction this still-more-secluded and safe retreat.

The tunnels and rocky chambers below the Palace had been constructed and used by Ruggedo, the old Gnome King, when he was plotting to capture the Emerald City. Ruggedo himself had been captured, but the underground caves and passageways had been left pretty much as they were. There were a number of chairs, a rough bed and table, and numerous candles and lamps.

Altogether it made an ideal workshop for the merchant to try out his experiments. In the cellar he might easily have been discovered by any of the kitchen boys sent down for supplies, but in Ruggedo's old hideout he could be sure of complete privacy. Lighting the largest of the lamps that hung on its rusty chain over the table, Matiah seated himself on a rickety old chair and prepared to concentrate with all his will power on the glittering emeralds. In the sickly green light he made a strange and sinister figure as he bent over the table, mumbling and chattering to himself. But after a whole day, during which he tried every known formula and combination, touching each gem in succession as he made his wish and counted to a hundred, he was still no nearer the solution of the mystery than he had been in Skampavia.

First he had tried the diamond clasp of the third necklace, sure that that was the key to their power. But nothing at all had happened, and the trick of the magic emeralds continued to elude him. To have in his fingers the

means to immense power and good fortune and still be unable to benefit was so infuriating, Matiah began to stamp, splutter, and beat his chest with rage and disappointment. Was it for this he had bribed a red eagle with the promise of three wishes to carry him across the Deadly Desert? Even now the mammoth bird was waiting impatiently on the edge of a little wood near the City ready to tear him to pieces if he failed to fulfill his part of the bargain.

No daylight penetrated into the tunneled chamber, and hardly realizing that it was now midnight, Matiah from sheer weariness and exasperation finally gave up and fell asleep, his head on the table, his hands still clutching the provoking chains. Footsteps pattering overhead wakened him at last, and also told him someone had come to the cellar for supplies. Stretching wearily, he rose and, going over to the stone steps, cautiously ascended and lifted the trapdoor. Now thoroughly convinced that the necklaces would not work unless worn by someone else, he determined to seize the first person entering the cellar and compel him to help.

The merchant did not have long to wait. All unconscious of the part he was to play in Matiah's dark schemes, a young Kitchen Boy came whistling his way toward a great, golden bin of potatoes. The bin was just beyond the trapdoor, and lowering it to a mere crack, Matiah let the boy pass. Then, as he leaned down to fill his basket, the wily merchant flung up the trapdoor, fell upon the boy, and carried him kicking and screaming down the stairs. Here with threats, promises and innumerable shakings, he finally reduced the poor lad to a state of frightened submission. With the sparkling necklaces round his neck, he touched one and then another of the

emeralds as Matiah wished and counted and counted and wished. After each unsuccessful trial the merchant would rage and stamp and shake his fists till the boy was quite convinced he was in the presence and power of a madman and frantically waited for someone to overhear Matiah's ravings and come down to rescue him. But nobody did!

While the unfortunate Kitchen Boy was spending a miserable morning in the underground chamber, Skamperoo and Chalk were going through the motions of enjoying themselves above stairs, but without any real zest or pleasure.

Only half-heartedly Skamperoo laughed at the jokes of the Scarecrow, and Chalk, for all his bright interest in the long recital of Kabumpo's adventures, was really in a fidget of uneasiness, trying to keep an eye on all the doors and windows in the Throne Room at once.

Something was going to happen. The white horse felt it in every bone. And just as the soft musical gong sounded the call for luncheon, his worst fears were realized. Suddenly, without reason or warning, the castle was plunged into total darkness. Thumps, bumps, hysterical shouts and screams followed closely on the heels of this disconcerting event. Chalk, who had been standing back of Skamperoo, immediately leaned forward and grasped his impetuous little Master by the seat of his Royal Breeches.

"Be still!" commanded the white horse through his teeth and the white leather of Skamperoo's riding pants, and he held on for dear life as the Emperor, like all the rest of the court and guests, tried to rush in every direction.

"He's done it! He's done it, and everything is ruined," wailed Skamperoo, struggling in vain to pull away from Chalk. "Matiah has discovered the secret of the necklaces, and now we are ruined. Do you hear? Ruined!"

"I hear," hissed Chalk, giving Skamperoo a little shake, "and so will everyone else unless you shut your mouth. Be quiet, I tell you; do nothing till the right moment, unless you want to dash out your brains against a pillar in the dark." Too frightened to argue or struggle further, Skamperoo at last subsided. All about, courtiers, servants, and guests were screaming and bumping into each other or the furniture, and when a stern hand suddenly seized his bridle, Chalk trembled violently in spite of himself.

"Follow me," directed a firm, stern little voice, "and no harm will come to you..." Now Chalk had been expecting to see or hear Matiah, and the sound of this small, strange voice was a welcome relief and surprise. Taking a firmer hold on Skamperoo, he thrust out his head in an endeavor to touch or feel the newcomer. As he did so, the hand on his bridle began to tug him gently but firmly forward.

"Look out there, mind what you are about, the Emperor of Oz is just ahead!" whinnied Chalk, now thoroughly alarmed. "We are not used to taking orders from strangers."

"Oh, we won't be strangers long," promised the strange voice pleasantly. "So THIS is the Emperor of Oz, and is this the way you usually carry him?"

"Come ON, Bitty Bit, what's the use of all this arguing?" put in another voice impatiently. "Let's get out of this confusion. The Wizard's laboratory is right across the hall. Tell him to come there."

"A girl!" decided Chalk with another gulp of relief. "Maybe we are not so badly off, after all!" And lifting his head in spite of Skamperoo's great weight, he spoke proudly and confidently, "Whoever you are, we welcome you to Oz, and if you can explain this unearthly and unexpected darkness, we

will gladly follow you and do as you say."

"Good!" chuckled Bitty Bit, tugging manfully at his bridle. "This way, please." There was still so much screaming and confusion in the Throne Room, no one had overheard the conversation between the newcomers and the Emperor's horse, and guided by the invisible hand Chalk crossed the room without bumping into anything or anybody. A moment later they were in the dark, quiet laboratory that had once belonged to the Wizard of Oz.

CHAPTER 18

THE EMPEROR'S HORSE MAKES A BARGAIN

Bitty Bit's shooting tower had made a record trip to the Emerald City, and guided by the little Seer of Some Summit had come to a deft and dexterous stop right outside the windows of the great Throne Room. After a short, anxious look inside and before anyone was aware of their arrival, Dorothy removed the lid from the box of the powder of darkness and threw a generous pinch into the air, plunging the Emerald City into an instant and thunderous dark. Under cover of this magic darkness, Dorothy, Pigasus and Bitty Bit boldly entered the palace and singled out the white horse and his terrified Master. They had fully expected some resistance Dorothy had brought a long piece of rope, and Pigasus carried a stout club under his wing but they were delighted to find the Emperor too frightened and his white horse too clever to resist an invisible foe.

Being able to see in the dark themselves, they had Chalk and Skamperoo at a decided advantage. Dorothy's plans, now that they had actually returned to the Emerald City, were rather vague, but Bitty Bit knew just what he hoped and intended to do. His seerish powers had enabled him to discover that all

the changes in Oz had been brought about by the magic emeralds which in some way had fallen into Skamperoo's hands, and these emeralds Bitty Bit meant to have at the earliest possible moment. So first he ordered all the windows and doors to the laboratory closed, then, annoyed by the screams and crashes still issuing from every room in the castle, he advised Dorothy to put the lid back on the powder of darkness.

"But supposing someone disturbs us before we finish," objected Pigasus, looking doubtfully at the tremendous warhorse who stood with feet braced and ears back ready to listen or defy them. Somehow Chalk had managed to toss Skamperoo back into the saddle, and with both hands fixed grimly in the horse's mane the Emperor was blinking his eyes in a vain attempt to see them or catch a glimpse of Matiah, for he was convinced that the merchant was at the bottom of the whole procedure.

"If we agree to lift this pall of darkness, will you agree to grant us an uninterrupted hour of your time?" asked Bitty Bit, turning toward the Emperor, but really addressing the horse, whom he considered the better man of the two.

"I think we can, without undue danger, promise that," answered Chalk guardedly, while Skamperoo hemmed and hawed with indecision. "Of course, you must promise to use no more magic against us."

"Well, the same goes for you, too, remember," put in Pigasus quickly. "An hour's time and conversation and no trickery."

"But who who are you?" muttered Skamperoo, finding his voice at last. "I seem to hear three different voices."

"You'll soon see," answered Dorothy, clapping the lid on her powder of

darkness. With a suddenness that made them all gasp, the laboratory was again flooded with the bright noon sunshine, and in a determined row before him Skamperoo saw a pretty little girl in green, a fat pink pig with white wings, and a small, wrinkled old gentleman in brown.

"W-why," whinnied Chalk, drawing in a deep breath of relief, "at first I thought you were enemies, but now I see that you are merely visitors and friends."

"That depends," observed Bitty Bit, seating himself on a tall stool that brought him on a level with Chalk's nose. "I am the Seer of Some Summit, but these others are Princess Dorothy and Pigasus, the Winged Pig. They really belong in this palace and are close friends of the rightful ruler of this country, Ozma of Oz!"

"I am the rightful ruler of Oz!" shouted Skamperoo, growing red in the face and thrusting out his three chins belligerently.

"Oh, don't bother putting on a show for me," exclaimed Bitty Bit, waving his arms impatiently. "Remember, I am a Seer, I know all, I see all, and what is more, I TELL ALL! You, my pretty fellow, are really the King of Skampavia, a small, no-count country on the other side of the Deadly Desert. In some way the long-lost necklaces of Lorna the Wood Nymph have come into your possession. With these necklaces you have enchanted the people of Oz into believing you are their ruler. You have wickedly banished Ozma and her allies and counselors and unlawfully made yourself Emperor of Oz."

"That seems to cover everything," drawled Chalk as Skamperoo turned from red to purple.

"Not everything!" went on Bitty Bit, shaking his finger sternly under

Chalk's nose. "Kingdoms are not won and held by trickery, my friends, and we are here to see that those necklaces are returned and the Kingdom of Oz restored to its proper rulers."

"And suppose we refuse!" suggested the white horse in a bored voice. "What then?"

"Why then," Bitty Bit threw back his shoulders and spun round several times on his shiny stool, "why then, it means WAR!" Bitty Bit did not say who were his friends or allies or where he should get his armies, but he spoke with such firm confidence, both Skamperoo and Chalk were taken aback and completely dismayed. Matiah had been bad enough, but this strange and determined little Seer was worse.

"Perhaps we can make a bargain or come to some agreement," suggested Chalk, resolved to save what he could for himself and his Master. "Suppose King Skamperoo and I agree to return the emerald necklaces, which undoubtedly belong in Oz, will you grant us the privilege of using them twice for ourselves?"

"But but " Skamperoo was about to blurt out the fact that they no longer had the necklaces when Chalk gave him a savage nip on the leg which silenced him effectively.

"Why should we do that?" inquired Pigasus, fluttering his wings nervously.

"After all the grief and worry you have caused us, you are lucky to get off with your skins."

"Where are the necklaces now?" asked Dorothy, stepping close to Chalk and looking eagerly up into the face of the discomfited Emperor. Skamperoo's face grew long as a balloon suddenly punctured, but remembering Chalk's

last bite, he managed to keep silent.

"When you have answered OUR question, we will answer yours," stated Chalk, firmly but pleasantly. "You can, of course, appeal to the Court and members of the household, but I think you will find them entirely satisfied with their present Emperor and ready to stand by him to the last man." At Chalk's words, Bitty Bit looked rather crestfallen. As the white horse had so quietly stated, they were perfectly powerless to take the necklaces by force, and quick inspection of the Emperor when he first reached the palace had convinced him Skamperoo was not wearing the precious emeralds. At this rather embarrassing moment a series of thumps, kicks, and knocks on the door made not only the rescuers but the Emperor and Chalk turn rather pale.

"Oh! Oh! It's Matiah!" quavered Skamperoo, whose nerves were completely shaken by the shocking disclosures of the last few moments. "Oh! Oh! What'll we do now?"

"Hold your tongue," advised Chalk, and swinging round he trotted briskly over to the door.

"Who's there?" he demanded in a dignified voice.

"'Tis I Iva the Kitchen Boy!" stuttered a frightened treble. "I must see the Emperor at once."

"Well, shall we let him in?" Bitty Bit looked uneasily at Pigasus and Dorothy and then rather thoughtfully at Chalk.

"Suit yourselves," yawned the white horse indifferently. "It's probably a messenger telling us the pudding is cold with all this delay and darkness.

You asked for an hour's time and conversation and we agreed to that demand, so it is for you to decide what to do, not us."

"Oh, let him in," fumed Pigasus, "and tell him to stop this hammering and

yammering. What harm is there in a Kitchen Boy?"

So Bitty Bit, taking the key from the lock and squinting through the keyhole

to assure himself there was only a small boy outside, quickly admitted him.

Now in darted Iva, screaming loudly of a madman in the cellar and bursting

into tearful and incoherent recital of his woes. Scarcely had he got out

two sentences before Skamperoo fell bodily off his horse and made a

desperate snatch at the Kitchen Boy's throat. But Bitty Bit was too quick

for him. His eyes, too, had caught the glimmer of emeralds, and jerking the

three chains from the lad's neck as Chalk made a savage lunge forward, he

tossed them to Pigasus. Catching them on his nose as cleverly as a trained

seal, the pink pig spread his wings and flew up to the top of a tall

cabinet, where he sat panting and puffing with satisfaction and defiance.

"Come down, you fat scoundrel!" roared Skamperoo, dancing up and down like a

dervish, while the poor Kitchen Boy, outraged by the way both Skamperoo and

Bitty Bit had rushed upon him, burst into loud sobs and, rushing out the

still open door, ran crying down the corridor. Slamming the door and

locking it after him, Bitty Bit rather anxiously waited for Chalk's next

move, and as usual Chalk was quite prepared and ready to make it.

"Well," he observed with a jaunty flick of his tail, "now that you have the

famous wishing emeralds, I suppose you are satisfied, and we may as well

go. Come along, Skamperoo, you will get nowhere in an argument with a pig.

Just casting pearls before swine, you know, and he already has our

emeralds!"

"You mean your wishing necklaces!" shrieked Pigasus furiously. "And I'll

tell you what I wish. I wish that you and your silly Master were clams at

the bottom of the Nonestic Ocean!" Thoroughly shocked and startled by the pink pig's unexpected wish, Bitty Bit and Dorothy rushed toward the cabinet, hoping in some way to prevent the wish from taking effect. But they need not have worried, for of course nothing happened at all. Then Skamperoo, urged by Chalk, hastily climbed into the saddle.

"Well," whinnied the white horse, twitching his ears provokingly, "goodbye to you. Goodbye! We'll just be trotting along."

"Wait! Look here, hold on a bit." The little Seer of Some Summit stepped angrily in front of the white horse. "How do these emeralds work, how are we to disenchant the rulers of Oz and restore Ozma to the throne unless we know the proper way to use these magic chains?"

"I'm afraid that's YOUR problem," sighed Chalk, rolling his eyes round at Skamperoo. "Come now, my little mannikin, open up the door. We kept our promise, and you must keep yours. After all, my Master has done no real harm here. There has been no war or bloodshed. In fact, everything has been decidedly gay and jolly. If his laudable ambition to better himself brought Ozma and her counselors a little well-earned rest, at least they have suffered no pain or unpleasantness and are perfectly unaware of what has happened to them. Open the door, I tell you, or I'll call for help, and there are many in this palace who would gladly come to our assistance."

"Oh! Oh! What shall we do?" wailed Dorothy as Bitty Bit stood uncertainly with his back to the door. "You're the horriddest horse I've ever known!"

"Well, that's all in the way you look at me," answered Chalk, staring steadily into Dorothy's eyes. "You, my dear, are fond of your Mistress, Queen Ozma of Oz, and are trying to help her. I, on my part, am exceedingly fond of my Master, the King of Skampavia, and am trying to help him. You

can't blame me for that, you know."

"The creature is right," sighed Bitty Bit, "and we'll have to agree to his plans, preposterous though they are."

"That would, of course, be the sensible thing to do," murmured Chalk, lowering his eyes modestly. "You grant me two wishes, and I will tell you the proper way to use the magic wishing chains."

"But suppose they are bad wishes I mean," Bitty Bit corrected himself hastily, "good for you, but bad for us, what then? With the necklaces in your possession, you could wish yourselves away in an instant."

"That," admitted Chalk, "is perfectly true, but I am afraid you will have to take that chance and trust me."

"Never do it! Never do it!" squealed Pigasus, who now had the necklaces tucked tightly under his wing. "We might as well throw ourselves out of the window."

But Bitty Bit, closing his eyes and pressing his fingers close to his forehead, made no reply. "I'll trust you," he said after a short silence, and opening his eyes, he looked cheerfully up at the white horse. "Hand down those necklaces, Pigasus, and be quick about it, too; I hear footsteps in the passageway."

"Well, don't blame me if we're turned to pretzels and pumpernickel," grunted the pig, dropping the necklaces into the seer's outstretched hand.

"Goodbye, all." Turning his back in disgust and covering his ears with his wings, Pigasus waited in fear and trembling for the end. But Bitty Bit quite calmly handed the emeralds to Skamperoo, and Skamperoo immediately draped them over Chalk's left ear.

"Now, then," murmured Chalk, looking firmly back at the unhappy Emperor, "repeat exactly what I say, and all will yet be well. I wish," began Chalk, while Skamperoo listened with bulging eyes, "I wish that the five wishes I make when we return to Skampavia shall be instantly granted." As Skamperoo repeated the wish and slowly started to count to a hundred, Dorothy fidgeted with uneasiness, and Pigasus fairly groaned with alarm, for it seemed to them both that their danger had only been postponed and not averted.

"My second wish I will keep for our return," decided Chalk. "Now, my dear, attend closely. Since you are the avowed friend of Ozma and live with her in this palace, it seems to me you are the one to keep safely the secret of the magic emeralds." Moving close to Dorothy, Chalk put his soft, pink nose close to her ear and whispered several very hoarse sentences. "Get it? Get it?" he demanded, backing away exuberantly.

"Oh is THAT all?" Dorothy pushed back her hair in surprise and bewilderment. "Why, anyone could do that!"

"Then prove it by sending us back to Skampavia," beamed Chalk, shaking his mane approvingly. "It would be embarrassing for us to be here when Ozma and her friends return. Here, my child, take the necklaces, and I'll do the wishing." Pigasus, now more interested than frightened, tried his best to see what Dorothy did after she clasped the emeralds around her neck, and the white horse solemnly wished himself and Skamperoo back in Skampavia, but before Chalk reached ten in his counting, there was a whiff and puff, and except for a slight rustle in the air, no sign at all of the splendid white steed and his red-faced Master.

"It works! It works!" exulted Bitty Bit, hopping about like a Brownie. "Can

you do it again, my dear? All we need to do is to wish that the people of Oz shall be released from this wicked spell of forgetting and then wish Ozma and all the others safely back to this palace."

"Don't forget Highboy!" cried Pigasus, switching his little tail violently.

"He's gone, too, you know, and don't forget Jinnicky and old Willy Green Whiskers!"

"I'll remember!" promised Bitty Bit. "All ready, Dorothy?" The little girl nodded, and Bitty Bit, looking and feeling more serious and important than he had ever felt in his whole little life, slowly made the wish that was to restore peace and happiness to Oz.

"I wish," said the little sage sternly, "that the wicked enchantment cast by Skamperoo upon the inhabitants of Oz be instantly dispelled. I wish that Ozma herself, the Wizard of Oz, the Red Jinn of Ev, the King and Queen of the Munchkins and their son Prince Philador, the King and Queen of the Gillikens and their giant horse, Glinda the Good Sorceress of the South, Nick Chopper the Tin Emperor of the East, and the Soldier with the Green Whiskers be immediately released from Thunder Mountain and restored to this palace. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven."

At seven Pigasus with a loud squall of astonishment fell from the top of the cabinet, and Dorothy rushed joyfully forward. For now every chair around the Wizard's table was occupied. At the head sat Ozma, calm and gracious as ever; at the foot the spry little Wizard; and between, all the others who had so recently lain at the bottom of Lightning Lake. Highboy stood over by the window looking dreamily out across the garden, and none of them seemed in the least surprised or excited to find themselves in the Wizard's

laboratory.

"Let me see " mused Ozma, raising her hand gravely, "Ah, yes, we are here to discuss a threatened danger to ourselves and the Kingdom of Oz."

"But it's all over now," cried Dorothy, running over to Ozma and flinging both arms round her waist. "It's all over, and we're safe and you're safe and my, how glad we are to have you back here again!"

"Here!" exclaimed the Wizard, popping up like a startled Jack-in-the-Box.

"Where else would we be?"

"Only at the bottom of Lightning Lake in Thunder Mountain," murmured Bitty Bit, coming modestly forward to meet the Fairy Ruler of Oz and winking merrily at Jinnicky, whom he already knew."

CHAPTER 19

THE STORY OF THE NECKLACES

Ozma's surprise and the astonishment of all the rest of that company around the Wizard's table can well be imagined.

"I didn't hear any thunder," snorted Highboy, lowering himself down to Bitty Bit's level. "Not a clap! And if we were at the bottom of Lightning Lake, what did we eat?"

"We didn't!" announced Jinnicky in a hollow voice, "What COULD we have eaten in such a place, you old fire-eater, you?" To have been enchanted and put out of existence for three whole days was an amazing experience, and as Dorothy and Bitty Bit, helped out now and then by Pigasus, explained all that had happened to the victims of Skamperoo's ambition and to themselves in the course of their journey of rescue, Ozma's face grew both grave and serious. It was disturbing to realize how easily Oz had been captured and

the powerful Wizards and Glinda the Sorceress pushed aside. The Wizard of Oz himself seemed to feel the most discouraged and downcast of all to think he had been so easily overcome, and that his magic had not been strong enough to withstand the wicked spell of the invaders.

"I should have foreseen something like this and been prepared," mourned the little man, mopping his head with a map of Oz which he happened to have in his pocket.

"Yes," sighed the Tin Woodman, feeling his joints anxiously to see whether they had been rusted by his three-day immersion in Lightning Lake, "we might have been prisoners in Thunder Mountain forever had it not been for Dorothy and Pigasus and this sagacious little Seer. But tell me, Dorothy, how is it that you alone of all the people in the palace remembered and missed us?"

"Well," confessed Dorothy, seating herself cautiously on Nick Chopper's tin knees, "it must have been the Wizard's wishing pill. You see, just as the Soldier's beard turned red, I found one in my pocket and popping it into my mouth wished that I might save Oz from any danger that threatened. It kept me from forgetting Ozma and all of you, and when I sat on Pigasus' back, he remembered, too, and we"

"Did save Oz!" finished the little Wizard, bounding triumphantly to his feet and restored to instant cheerfulness by Dorothy's generous statement. "I tell you, I'll match my wishing powers with any wishing powers in the country!"

"But you won't have to now," smiled Bitty Bit with an envious glance at the sparkling necklaces Dorothy had placed on the table before Ozma. "With

these emeralds and your own magic powers, nothing like this could ever happen in Oz again."

"Thank you, Bitty Bit," smiled the little Queen, nodding graciously. "Thank you a hundred times for all you have done for us and for Oz, and perhaps, if we coaxed, you might remain as our Royal Seer."

"Hear, here, our Royal Seer!" cried Pigasus, clapping his wings. "Will you be it, Sir Bitty Bit?"

"Well," acknowledged Bitty Bit with a low bow toward Ozma, "I'm tempted to accept, but on the other hand, I am so foolishly fond of my own castle I just could not be content in any other place. But if Your Majesty ever needs me for serious business, you can always command my services by using either the wishing necklaces or your magic belt."

"And he'll come like a shot in his shooting tower," Dorothy smiled as she slid carefully from Nick Chopper's knee. "But say, what's that?" A hundred footsteps sounded in the corridor, accompanied by confused voices, questioning calls and finally loud thumps on the door. "It must be all the rest of the courtiers and visitors remembering they have a Queen!"

"I hear Scraps and the Scarecrow," squealed Pigasus, "I hear Bettsy Bobb and Trot. Quick, Dorothy, open the door."

"No, no, not yet," said Ozma gently but firmly. "There is more, much more for us to hear and settle. But you go out, Pigasus, and tell them all about our enchantment, Skamperoo's reign, and our rescue."

"Be glad to! Charmed! And trust me to do it right." Swelling up with importance and pride, Pigasus flew out the window before Dorothy had time to open the door. A few moments later the company in the Wizard's laboratory heard him calling everyone to follow him to the Throne Room and

hear the most startling news since Dorothy killed the Wicked Witches of the East and West.

"And how he'll love telling it," said Bitty Bit, smiling across at the Wizard of Ev. "A great idea of yours, this pig, Jinny. Even if his verses are low, I like him."

"Oh, everyone likes Pigasus," declared Dorothy, coming over to sit on the arm of Glinda's chair. "But what I'd like to know is how that Kitchen Boy happened to have the emeralds, how Skamperoo got them, and where they came from in the first place."

"Yes," murmured Glinda, who, like the Wizard, felt very much annoyed to have been overpowered by a fat, unimportant monarch like Skamperoo. "Now that we have these wishing chains, we must guard them carefully to keep them from falling into such mischievous hands again."

"I believe Bitty Bit can tell us the story of the emeralds," said Ozma, who had been much impressed by the cheerful little seer of Some Summit. "With his gift of foreseeing and foretelling he probably knows the whole story."

"Can he look backward as well as forward?" inquired the Wizard challengingly.

"Just as well," confessed Bitty Bit with an embarrassed little cough, and as every head turned expectantly toward him, the sage closed his eyes and quietly told them the interesting story of Matiah's three necklaces.

"These magic emeralds," began Bitty Bit, waving his hands rhythmically backward and forward, "were first collected and strung into necklaces by a wizard named Wam for the King of the Green Mountain as a gift for the wood nymph Lorna. But the King of the Green Mountain was an ugly little dwarf,

and though she had promised to marry him, no sooner did Lorna have the necklaces than she turned the King into a frog and hid herself away in her own forest.

"In the giant hollow tree where Lorna lived there was a mischievous family of squirrels. That night as Lorna lay sleeping with the emeralds on a little golden plate beside her, one of the squirrels, thinking the gems some new and delicious kind of nuts, stole and buried them away for the winter. Next morning, though Lorna ran crying and searching all through the forest, she was unable to find her wishing necklaces."

"Then what became of them?" gasped Dorothy as Bitty Bit, opening his eyes for a moment, blinked cheerfully over their heads.

"Wait, I'll tell you!" Closing his eyes, the sage went hurriedly on with the story. "Ah, so this is it! A woodcutter's boy, poking about among the leaves, found the emeralds, and as emeralds in themselves are not uncommon in Oz, he traded them to a peddler for a new ax. The peddler, arriving after a long while in Skampavia, had no trouble in disposing of the jewels. In Skampavia, you must know, emeralds, pearls, or jewels of any kind are practically unknown, and a merchant gave the peddler not only his house and shop, but all of his merchandise for the three sparkling chains.

"By a law in Skampavia, every subject must render to the King one-third of all he owns or raises, and in due course one of the necklaces was sent to Skamperoo. The King, delighted with the sparkling gems, insisted on having all three necklaces, and Matiah himself brought them to the castle, determined if possible to steal them back at the first opportunity. In order to do so without arousing the suspicions of the King, he pretends to be a Wizard and tells him if he, Matiah, wears the three necklaces, he can

grant any wish the King may make, but that as he makes the wish he must close his eyes and count to a hundred.

"As soon as Skamperoo began to count, Matiah started to run off with the emeralds, and that accounts for the white horse, for you see, Skamperoo's first wish was for a splendid white charger with a golden mane and tail. Frightened almost out of his senses by the sudden appearance of the horse and the knowledge that the chains really did have some magic power, Matiah steals back beside the King, resolved to wait for another opportunity to procure the necklaces.

"Meanwhile, Skamperoo, excited and happy over the granting of his first wish, confides in the merchant his second wish and ambition to be ruler of Oz. Matiah, to gain time in which he can work out the secret of the emeralds' power, approves of the King's idea, but tells him he can only grant one wish a week. He then advises Skamperoo to cause all the people in Oz to forget their former rulers and to remove the Wizard and all his magic, Ozma, and the rulers of the four Oz countries to the inaccessible caverns of Thunder Mountain.

"Now while Matiah is trying his best to discover the trick of the magic emeralds, Skamperoo, growing tired of the tempy fellow, appealed to his horse. The horse, being magically brought to life and being unusually sharp-witted and quick, soon worked out the problem. With his help Skamperoo wished the spell of forgetting upon Ozma's subjects, banished her Highness and all of the others just as Matiah had suggested, and managed to rule Oz for three whole days."

"But what became of Matiah?" asked Glinda, leaning forward eagerly.

"At this moment Matiah is lying in a senseless condition in the underground chamber beneath this castle," Bitty Bit told them solemnly and without opening his eyes. "Soon after Skamperoo left for Oz, the merchant was driven out of Skampavia by Pinny Penny, whom Skamperoo had made King. Matiah, furious to think the apparently stupid sovereign had outwitted him, bribed an eagle to carry him across the desert, arrived at the Emerald City and soon afterward managed to really steal the necklaces from Skamperoo. Discovering beneath the cellar the excavated chambers of the old Gnome King, he retired to this quiet spot to again experiment with the emeralds.

"Needing another person to help, he seized the Kitchen Boy who had come to the cellar for supplies and forced him to assist in his experiments. How soon he might have discovered the real trick of the chains I cannot say, but our own arrival and Gloma's powder of darkness happily interrupted him. The Kitchen Boy, who had kept his eyes glued to the stone steps and trapdoor during the entire morning, made an immediate dash for freedom and managed to escape in spite of the darkness. Matiah, not so fortunate, rushed into a stone pillar and knocked himself senseless. He's still lying there, and I suggest that your Majesty deal with him at once."

"I will," decided Ozma firmly, as Bitty Bit opened his eyes and looked cheerfully around the table. "And I'll do it by means of these very magic emeralds. Put on the emeralds, Dorothy, for you alone know the secret of their magic power." So Dorothy, anxious to have Matiah out of Oz before he recovered his wicked wits, hastily clasped the three chains around her slim throat.

"It is my earnest wish that Matiah shall immediately and henceforth forget the emerald necklaces of Oz, return to his country, and become a good and

simple citizen of Skampavia," said Ozma seriously, beginning her count to one hundred.

"He's gone! He's gone!" piped up Bitty Bit, who had closed his eyes as soon as Ozma started to speak. "And if I were you, my dear, I would send off that red eagle, too. I see him lurking on the edge of our city with an exceedingly fierce light in his eye." So Ozma made another wish, turning the eagle to a harmless sparrow.

"And what about Skamperoo?" asked Cheeribed, King of the Munchkins, who up to this time had not spoken a word. "Should he not be punished in some way?"

"I would not bother with old Skamper," advised Bitty Bit with a small chuckle. "Before I agreed to give his white horse those five wishes, I closed my eyes, looked ahead, and discovered that they would all be good wishes. Not only good but wise, and from now on I think you can trust that clever white horse and a little fellow called Pinny Penny to keep their Master out of mischief and Oz."

"Well, in that case," sighed Ozma rather breathless from so much counting, "everything is happily settled."

"And in that case," boomed Joe King, gallantly helping his little Queen to her feet, "I suggest we start celebrating all over again, not only the discovery of Oz by mortals, but the saving of Oz as well! I for one feel terribly cheated at missing Notta's circus."

"So do I! So do I!" exclaimed the little Prince Philador, climbing boisterously into Highboy's saddle. "I want to see a circus!"

"And so you shall," promised Ozma gaily. "We will start the celebration at

exactly the point where we left Oz for Thunder Mountain, and have the tableaux, the pageants, and the picnics all over again."

And that, my dear, is exactly what they did do, and everyone, including Bitty Bit, enjoyed themselves so much there was not an unhappy person in the Emerald City. And not until the end of the second day did Dorothy remember to tell Ozma the magic secret of the wishing emeralds. "On the sixth count, you wink both eyes," whispered Dorothy, giving Ozma a little hug. "Good night!"

"Good gracious, so THAT'S it!" smiled Ozma, comprehending instantly what Dorothy meant. "I suppose Matiah did it in sheer excitement the first time. Well, I have often heard of doing things in the twinkling of an eye, but now we shall really be able to have them that way. No one knows this secret but you and me and a white horse, and no one must ever know it, for wishes are dangerous and cause more unhappiness than joy, so we'll never tell another soul, will we, Dorothy?"

"Never!" agreed the little girl, looking solemnly over her shoulder at the safe where Ozma had hidden her new treasure.

CHAPTER 20

BACK IN SKAMPAVIA!

"So there you are!" Pinny Penny straightened up with a little grimace, for he had been planting flowers in a new rock garden he was planning for the King. With an expression about equally compounded of exasperation and affection, he looked at his former Master and the white horse who had, without sound or warning, dropped down in the path before him. "I thought you'd come back," continued Pinny Penny, calmly rubbing the mud from his

fingers and putting out his hand. "So it was your horse after all." His gaze rested speculatively on the splendid white steed and richly jeweled robes of Skamperoo. "And you've made your fortune, I see! Well, welcome home anyway; your crown's hanging on a nail back of the throne, and I think you will find everything in order."

"In order! Why, it looks wonderful!" shouted Skamperoo, leaping exuberantly out of the saddle and honestly surprised and pleased at the pleasure he felt in seeing old Pinny Penny again. "You've had the palace painted, and this garden and that fountain and the flowers. They're all new, aren't they?"

"Yes," agreed Pinny Penny guardedly. "I made a few new laws while you were gone, Skamper, making the tax only one-twentieth of our subjects' earnings. They were so grateful and delighted, they've been sending you presents ever since. Then the guards (having no drill or marching to bother them, I did away with THAT, too), the guards in their odd time agreed to work around the castle, and we've been brightening up the old place quite a bit. I tell you," Pinny Penny exhaled his breath noisily, "we'll make a going and coming country of this yet!"

"Of course we will," said Skamperoo, bouncing happily along at his side.

"I've had a lot of experience since I saw you, old Skinny Pins. Ho, Pinny, my boy, I've been an Emperor in Oz!"

"OZ? Never!" Closing his lips into a thin line, Pinny Penny looked from his Master to Chalk, who was stepping sedately along on his other side.

"But it's perfectly true," whinnied the white horse, prancing a bit from sheer enjoyment, "and now we are home with five splendid wishes."

"Wishes?" sniffed Pinny Penny, rearing his head suspiciously. "What good are wishes?"

"But these wishes really work and come true," explained Chalk with a toss of his head, "and what's more, they are going to work and come true for Skampavia!"

"Any wish you work hard enough for will come true," insisted Pinny Penny stubbornly. "Wishes POOH! Wishes POOH! `If wishes were horses, beggars would ride!'" finished the little Prime Minister half under his breath.

"But don't you see?" Skamperoo grasped Pinny Penny firmly by the shoulders.

"This is one time when wishes WERE horses and beggars DID ride. My first wish was for a horse, and here he is, and as true as you are and as wise and clever. Why, even if the magic emeralds give me nothing more, I am still the luckiest fellow on this side of the Deadly Desert!"

"Moons, stars and rainbows! I believe you have gotten some sense," gasped Pinny Penny, staring with wide eyes into Skamperoo's face. "And that's the first good I ever knew to come of magic."

Pulling Pinny Penny down to his old bench, now neatly mended and painted green, the King of Skampavia told his little Prime Minister the whole story I have just been telling you. When he finished and settled back complacently, Pinny Penny, instead of looking glad or pleased, stared mournfully at the ground.

"Now what's the matter?" demanded Skamperoo, clapping him impatiently on the back while Chalk, breaking off a little branch with his teeth, tickled Pinny Penny mischievously under the chin. "Why are you so sad and solemn?"

"Because " Pinny Penny ground the toe of his boot deeply into the gravel

in the path "if you really have five more magic wishes, you'll probably be going to some grand other place and be spending the rest of your life in travel."

"If that were so, we wouldn't be here at all," puffed Skamperoo. "Now get this through your head, old fellow. We are here by our own wish and from now on my country is good enough for me and, when we've made these five good wishes, good enough for anybody!"

"There you go! There you go!" groaned Pinny Penny, covering his face with his hands. "It's the wishes I'm afraid of."

"Well, you needn't be!" With a great effort, Skamperoo made his first really great and wise decision. "You shall make the wishes yourself, Pinny Penny, and I shall save only one in case of trouble!"

"Bravo! Bravo!" snorted Chalk, prancing three times round the green bench.

"Me? You really mean me?" quavered Pinny Penny, pointing an unbelieving finger at his own midsection. Then, as Skamperoo nodded and before he could change his mind, the old Chancellor fairly leaped into the air. "I wish the King of this country to always be as wise and generous as he has succeeded in being at this moment, as wise as the young Fairy Ruler of Oz," panted Pinny Penny. "I wish that the people of Skampavia, using the powers and abilities they already have, shall make this a rich, happy and prosperous Kingdom. I wish that the climate and soil, the only bad features about which we might complain, shall become mild and fertile! That's all, that's all I can think of!" confessed Pinny Penny, shrinking happily back on the bench.

"Then I'll make a wish," whinnied Chalk, shaking his beautiful golden mane.

"I wish that we three may never be separated. Long live the KING AND HIS
PRIME MINISTER!"

"And his horse!" cried Skamperoo, bounding up to seize Chalk's bridle.

"And his horse!" echoed Pinny Penny heartily, running round to seize Chalk's
bridle on the other side. "We three for Skampavia forever!"

Then, with Chalk stepping proudly in the center, these three strangely
assorted comrades made their way into the palace. Knowing the power of the
magic emeralds and also the magic power of knowledge and experience, I am
sure that Skampavia under its new regime will soon be as happy and
prosperous as any Nation in Oz!

THE END