

B E E N I E I N O Z

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THIS BOOK IS FOR
(who else!)
SABRINA DIANE LAUMER

WITH THE LOVE OF
TWO BROTHERS

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"I'm tired," said the Scarecrow. He laid aside his croquet mallet and sat down on the marble bench beside the wicket.

"You can't be!" Dorothy cried. "You're not like us flesh people. You're magic!" She came over to sit beside the straw man and sympathetically took his arm. "Maybe your straw just needs changing," she suggested hopefully.

The Scarecrow shook his head mournfully. Even his cheerfully painted expression seemed glum.

"No, it's more than that, Dorothy," he said sadly. "After all, I'm almost a hundred now. It's been that long since you rescued me from that farmer's field, you know."

"That's nothing," returned Dot jauntily. "If you're a hundred, what about me? I wasn't zero years old when first I found you."

"No," admitted her straw-stuffed friend. "But you're not straw either. Flesh—'meat', as you used to call it—lasts a lot longer—even a century if people are careful."

"Or longer, if they live in Oz." But Dorothy grew pensive, reminded of her mortality.

"Besides," continued the straw man, "you weren't all worn and faded while still being brand new, the way I was. That would make the difference."

"How do you mean?" said Dorothy, not quite catching on.

"Don't you remember that day?: now celebrated around the world wherever t. v. is known. Remember how I looked?"

"Yes, surely," confirmed the girl. "You looked friendly—although rather queer as well... In those days 'queer' simply meant odd or unusual," she reminded, just so her friend wouldn't have his feelings hurt.

"That's right," agreed the Scarecrow amiably. "In those days you could be gay too—without getting arrested. How the language changes."

"But what did you mean about how you looked?" pursued Dorothy.

"My suit even at the day of my birth was stated to be 'worn

and faded'—and my boots were 'old'. And since in my case clothes make the man, although I personally am only in my nineties, my substance is much older. My 'outer me' may be as old as 125. No wonder I'm starting to feel tired."

"But you always said—"

"Yes, that's right: that the farmer's old caftan I wore was good strong hessian, and that twenty or however many years it was—in wind and weather hadn't really ruined it much at all."

"That's the trouble!" exclaimed the Kansas girl, suddenly understanding. "That's what's the matter with you now! I bet. It isn't *you* that's tired. It's your 'hessian'—or denim, or twill, or whatever it is—that's worn out—"

The Scarecrow looked put out. "Well, not quite 'out'," he protested. "Whenever I get the least fray I go at once to Sewsan Smiggs's granddaughter in the palace attic and have her mend it with her grandma's wonderful invisible stitches. This outfit is as wear-worthy as it was a century ago."

"Okay, okay," backwatered Dot. "But I still think it's a case of material-fatigue. You know: like 'metal fatigue' in airplanes—or, maybe, more exactly, like the constituents in the famous one-hoss shay. They were so strong they—just like you—survived a hundred years and a day, and then they fell all to pieces at once."

"Hmm, maybe you're right at that," sadly agreed the straw man. "I feel like I'm about to go all to pieces." And here the worthy nonegenarian began to weep.

"Hey!" cried Dorothy in alarm, "don't go all to pieces on me! There's got to be something we can do. Yoo-hoo, oh, Ozma!" she yodeled.

The other girls were standing in a group down at the far end of the croquet pitch. Betsy Bobbin was trying to detach her mallet from a particularly sticky wicket. "What is it, Princess?" she puzzled for the fifth time. "I thought that bee-swarm we saw had paused here and this was just honey. But it seems more like iron glue."

§ See *The Gnome King of Oz* and *A Farewell to Oz* for more about this noble dame. Editor's note.

“It does seem quite magically tight-holding, doesn’t it?” Once more all three girls seized the mallet handle together and tried to pull it loose. It was at that moment that Dorothy’s call sounded.

“Never mind, Betsy,” consoled the young Oz ruler. “I’ll go get the Magic Belt in a minute and detach it that way... Yes, Dorothy!” she called:

Soon the Scarecrow had four young girls trying to console him but when he now discovered that he hadn’t even strength to get up off the marble bench his consolation was at an end, and he wept anew: dry tears, not even straw ones. He was veritably distraught.

The girls too were nearly in tears at the sight of their ancient friend so unmanned. But girls of course couldn’t do anything about ‘re-manning’ a man. This thought gave Ozma an idea.

“The Wizard!” she exclaimed. “He has technical know-how. He’ll know what to make of the case and how it may be treated — if it can,” she added dubiously. Ozma herself could in the twinkling of an eye have replaced any part of the (living) straw man, but in a situation like the present, with presumably *all* parts wanting replacement, how much would an all-parts-replaced image remain their original old comrade and not simply be somebody new they’d never met? No matter how magically capable she might be, Ozma was not, so far, an adept at transferring a *personality* from creature A to creature B. She wondered if it could be done.

It could not.

The group were in the rooms of O.Z. Diggs, Wizard-in-Extraordinary to the Royal Court of Oz, up 708 steps in the east wing tower of the Palace of Magic, and had just heard such a pronouncement from His Nibs' own lips.

"Why, no," said the Wizard. "For an entity to remain its true self (during whatever vicissitude of transformation or magic spell) some part of the veritable original substance must be present in the carry-over. But if, as we surmise, *every* part of our amiable old friend is due for imminent dissolution, what part could we choose? We wouldn't want the ninety-nine-per-cent like-new Scarecrow to have an eye, a hand... a brain! that was inherently feebler than all the rest of him—"

"No, definitely not," said Princess Dorothy with authority. "It wouldn't be the same!"

"No, it would be different," argued Betsy Bobbin logically. "Suppose Scarec's hands were too weak to pick up a croquet malle—!"

"Or his eye to gauge the distance to the next wicket," suggested Trot.

"Or his brain—to come to my assistance," posited Queen Ozma, "when some problem proved too knotty for me."

"That would be grievous indeed," concurred Wizard Diggs, "I think we can all agree.

"No, what we want is a strong and vigorous *true* Scarecrow of Oz to endow with wear-ever qualities so that this deplorable situation not again arrive for the next millenium or two—"

"Yes, I think that would be long enough," opined Ozma wisely.

"As it happens, the fruit of my latest experiments might come in here exquisitely opportunely—" said Diggs musingly.

"What experiments are those, good sir?" enquired the fairy Ruler, who marveled that she had not been kept abreast automatically of the progress of any investigation that sounded as

important as that.

The Wizard tittered. "Oh, it was nothing—to start with. But it seemed to get out of hand. Really it was nothing more than an attempt to produce a glue that would be truly ever-sticking: something that, applied to surfaces A and B to make them adhere, could never possibly be detached again—at least not without destroying either surface A or surface B."

"And...?" said Dorothy. "What happened?"

"Well, my product just wasn't strong enough. Not at first. I kept pouring in more and more of the fixative agents but always I was able, with strong solvents or, failing those, strong charms, to separate A and B again. No, what I wanted—rather as with God and the rock so heavy that even He couldn't move it—was an adhesive substance made by me so powerful that even by me the attached surfaces could never be separated. It began to seem a struggle between logical impossibilities..."

"Wizard," here interjected Betsy sternly, "you didn't by any chance try out your wonder-glue on the croquet wickets, did you?"

Diggs had the decency to blush. "Henh-henh," he snickered, caught out. "I confess! To test whether the adhesive's stick-to-it-iveness depended on the nature of the material it was applied to, I did go around putting dabs of it on this and that. Those wickets are an uncommon form of wrought copper. By the way, it worked quite well on them."

"I'll say," agreed Miss Bobbin disgruntledly.

"Hell, I'm not licked yet," pursued the savant nonchalantly, "though I'll admit that for the time being I can't seem to go any further in my search for the supreme fixative. Meanwhile I did turn up something else." The Wizard let a pregnant silence follow, which his auditors filled up with gurglings of excitement and curiosity.

"It was this," he replied to their promptings. "Just for laughs I later happened to sprinkle a soupçon of the Powder of Life in the glue pot. When it was well blended I sprayed a bit of it on a desk ornament and behold: it promptly came to lively life—never

more, I fear, to lose it, unless the object be utterly destroyed—”

“How fascinating,” breathed Princess Dot. “What ornament was that?”

“I expect you noticed it when you came in,” said the Wizard ruefully. “That stuffed baby alligator with the light bulb in its mouth that you see dodging about on the floor there? Perhaps you remember, Dorothy, that your aunt, Mrs. Emily, gave it to me on my last birthday. It had been doing duty nicely for illumination on my desk—but I’m afraid those days are over. I can’t get it to sit still any more.”

The girls all giggled as they took a heightened interest in the gimcrack that had already succeeded in tripping up one or two of them.

“But how does that help our present situation?” Queen Ozma returned the discussion to cases.

“It did seem a bit of a dead end to me, your grace,” answered the Wizard. “But when you mentioned your problem it suddenly struck me: what if one were to apply this, by now, really extremely powerful and tough and permanent—and withal life-giving—medium to the Scarecrow as he was originally in his days of youthful vigor? That would make a young strong Scarekewers young and strong *forever!*”

“A splendid thought,” approved the girl ruler. “Only, there isn’t any original Scarecrow any longer that is fresh and like now.”

“Ah, but there is,” contradicted Diggs. “The original portraits of our hero are just as much truly him as is the living man we see before us. *All* are the products of the fruitful minds and hands of the original Onlie Begettors—”

“You mean Messrs. Baum, Denslow, and no doubt Neill,” ventured Ozma.

“Just so—”

The Scarecrow’s brain was not so worn out but that he sensed which way the wind was blowing. “If,” he now inserted, “I am to look permanently like the likeness by Mr. Denslow or Mr. Neill, please let it be the latter,” he pleaded. “After all, I have

looked that way for three quarters of a century or more. Besides, I still remember acutely the awful wrench it made in my psyche when I had abruptly to change from resembling Mr. D's portraits to looking like those of the later artist. I wouldn't want that wrench in reverse now."

"A-ha," said the Wizard with satisfaction. "Our learned friend already grasps the thistle—I should say, the concept. As I envisage it we have but to bring to permanent ineradicable life a true—and still like brand-new—portrait of the young vigorous strawman and there we have a Scarecrow-for-the-ages."

Dorothy, though holding a university degree, still seemed a little backward in comprehending this concept. "But," she butted: "how is bringing a picture to life, be it ever so flattering and youthful a likeness, going to do our dear old original 'substantial' friend any good?"

"Some hokus-pokus must be applied, indubitably," admitted Diggs. "What has evolved in my mind in the half hour we have had the matter up for discussion is this: If we can bring to life a life-size full-figure picture of our friend, then cut it out of the canvas—with the most exquisite care—and attach it to our friend—"

"Burlap on burlap—more or less!" ejaculated Betsy Bobbin, suddenly catching on.

"Quite so," went on the Wizard. "—then seal the integument upon and around the substance of the living man, we will have the best of both worlds: the eternally youthful figure of the portrait enclosing the original physical matter of the Scarecrow as we have always known him. Voila: mission more than accomplished."

Nobody could come up with any logical flaws in the argument. So after batting the discussion ball back and forth a few more times, that is what they did... and Ozma helped. The picture they used was the handsome representation of the Scarecrow which is found between pages 174 and 176 in early editions of *The Scarecrow of Oz*.

The Royal Illustrator Mr. Neill had once sent a copy of the

original painting (part of a series depicting celebrities of the Court of Oz) as a mark of respect to Princess Ozma and it had hung for many a year in the Portrait Gallery next to the orangery in the Palace of Magic. Thither the crowd trooped.

It was Trot who had the idea of severing the figure of the straw man from the canvas while leaving plenty of the background fabric around. This was so that the whole three-dimensional body of the living Scarecrow could be covered with material (all of it now alive, of course) from the TWO-dimensional picture. That left the now 'eternalized' Scarecrow with a back (also of his head, arms, and legs) that was the neutral color of the background from the painting. That oddness would soon be rectified by the royal painter in residence, who simply applied to the straw man's back pigments matching those of his front.

The restored and now forever wear-proof Scarecrow danced a lively jig to celebrate, and all his friends stood round in a circle and were most gratified.

End of anecdote?

Not quite.



Up in the attic of a comfortable half-shabby old house in Flanders, New Jersey, three little girls were simultaneously playing with their sewing sets—and going through the contents of their grandmother’s old trunk. The attic possessed a distinct resemblance to the swaps table at an Oz-con. In a row under the sloping roof stood out-of-date Oz jelly glasses: nowadays people didn’t seem to go for painting on glass anymore: They just drank out of plastic—and had done with it. Against an end wall stood life-size pictures of such personages as the Frogman of Oz, His Highness King Scarecrow, and Woot the Wanderer. From the trunk tumbled battered old witch hats, Dorothy bags, pretend Magic Belts, and farmers’ garments and bits of armor plate—that looked suspiciously like fragments of the outer covering of certain too-well-known denizens of the magic land.

“What in the world was this old junk ever used for?” wondered grave Ginny—and was promptly answered by laughing Sabrina and Toni with golden hair:

“To dress up in, of course!”

“What is it, a costumer’s trunk?” still puzzled Ginny.

“No, for Hallowe’en... and costume parties. Around here, Dad says, when people had masquerading to do they copied the Oz characters a lot—because of Mr. Neill living right down the street.”

“Mmm,” concurred the oldest girl. “I know Neill gave those paintings to Grandma—” Here Ginny cocked her chin at the row of portraits at the end of the room. “He... admired her—and Grandad too, of course.”

“Yeah, the families used to visit back and forth,” blonde Toni could contribute.

By now little Beenie had incontinently yanked off her jeans and T-shirt and donned a heavy quilted dress that instantly converted her into a Patchwork Girl, suspender-button eyes and all. Only her adequate light brown hair didn’t resemble the original Oz maiden’s skimpy hank of yarn hair.

“Let’s talk about *me!*
I’m a Patchwork Girl now.

I’d dance a fandango

But I don’t know how,” rhymed Sabrina à la Scraps.

“Same ol’ Beenie,” sniffed Ginny: “always shucking her clothes at the least excuse.”

Sure enough, the youngest girl was again stripped to her skivvies and was in the act of putting on a denim jacket and a battered blue pointed hat, when startlingly a fourth voice said, “Good day.”

The girls all stopped in their tracks and Beenie forgot to button her fly.

“Did you speak?” asked the young girl in wonder, addressing the full-length picture of the Scarecrow of Oz, to which she, of the siblings, stood nearest.

“Certainly,” answered the Scarecrow. “How do you do?”

“I’m pretty well, thank you,” replied Sabrina politely. “How do you do?”

“I’m not feeling well,” said the Scarecrow with a smile. “I feel a bit flat.”

“But you *are* flat,” returned the girl reasonably. “You’re a picture: But how come you’re talking?” (Miracles were not daily in Flandera but Beenie was acting just like they were.)

“Search me,” said the pictured man. “It seems to have happened just this moment. I don’t remember being alive yesterday.”

“No, that’s right,” confirmed Toni. “At least, last week you weren’t. I was up here then, looking for an old gypsy headscarf with earrings on it.[§] None of the pictures were talking then.”

“I can’t account for it,” confirmed the picture of the Scarecrow. “Nevertheless it appears to be a fact. Already I’m not sure I like it: standing still all the time—or, if not still—” and here the painted figure executed a little jig in situ— “anyway unable to move off this canvas.”

§ See “Susie Pringle Among the Gypsies” in *Fountains, Fireworks and Balloons*. Ed. note.

"That would be—no fun," sympathized Toni, though at a loss for just the right word.

"Yes, you'd feel hampered—like claustrophobic," said Ginny the eldest, who had the largest vocabulary.

"Maybe we could help you," suggested little Beenie.

"If only you could," sighed the Scarecrow. "But how?"

Beenie reached for her sewing basket. "Here! What if we cut you out of the picture...? Then you could move around all you want." She grasped her scissors.

The idea was startling to everybody, but after a moment it also seemed the only solution. The children had no conception of the inviolability of works of art and the idea that you couldn't just-go-around-chopping up masterpieces, nor did the Scarecrow, trapped in his two dimensions, feel any connoisseur's compunction at the prospect of being freed from his medium.

"Cut loose!" he promptly cried.

Scarcely said than done. The wooden stretcher frame at the back of the life-size portrait proved a momentary stumbling block but the girls elected merely to ignore that and plunged their sharp scissor blades into the neutral off-white or grey background of the painting and cut toward the quivering outline of the famous man of—well, in this case, canvas.

"Hold still!" commanded Beenie. "We don't want to cut any bits of you off by accident."

All three of the young ladies were expert scissorers and now, working from three directions at once, they severed their ways precisely along the outer edges of the (thankably thick) black outlines within which Mr. Neill had delineated the Oz celebrity. In a very few minutes the Scarecrow was cut loose from his constraining background.

He took one step across the dusty deal floor of the attic—and fell on his face.

Oh, horrors. Nobody had thought of that! A sixteenth-of-an-inch-thick Scarecrow could by no means stand on his own two feet. Tender-hearted Toni burst into tears.

Beenie, not much more cheerful herself, looked to her elders

in consternation and for consolation. None was forthcoming. All they could do—and that didn't help much—was to turn the fallen canvas cut-out on its back.

With that the voice of the Scarecrow could speak and be understood again. "We goofed," he stated with chagrin. "How stupid. Of course a two-dimensional creature can't stand alone."

Only now did the quartet in the attic hit—too late—on the idea that the brilliant Trot, in Oz, had had at the appropriate time.

"Oh—, oh...!" mourned clever Ginny. "If only we'd cut you out with some of the background adhering! Then we could have wrapped you around something and sewn it up tight at the back and you'd have some—er, substance."

"Too late now," constated the Scarecrow.

"No, it's not," said Beenie, having a bizarre inspiration. "Sew him onto me! That way he'd have... somebody to stand up in."

The others all goggled, overcome with the preposterousness of the proposal. "But," objected Ginny, "—it's all impossible, of course—but *if* it could be done, you'd be two people in one. How would you ever cope with that?"

"I don't know," said the youngest girl. "Let's try it and find out. What about you, Scarecrow? Are you game?"

"What have I got to lose?" said the supine straw—I mean, canvas—man. "I haven't got much of a future lying on my back." He raised one knee languidly.

"You're best at sewing, Toni. Will you do it?" entreated the blonde girl's sister.

So they all watched Toni do it. Beenie lay down on the floor and they spread the cut-out Scarecrow over her and then the needle flew!

It was a fabulous moment when the new-created double person rose from the attic floor. There was the Munchkin-sized Beenie made over as the living presence of the Scarecrow of Oz. The Scarecrow costume she was wearing anyway completed the seamless illusion right round the back.

The man-girl danced a jig of delight right there on the spot.

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The Scarecrow knew how and the Beenie limbs were there to make it possible.

Greatly edified the three and a half people packed all the costumes back in the trunk, gathered up the sewing sets, and left the attic to go eat dinner. Equipped with a flesh body for the first time in his career, the Scarecrow was quite looking forward to it.

It was the custom in the Amerul household that the girls were allowed to ‘dress up’ when they liked. The whole family had theatrical leanings and found nothing reprehensible in pretending. The children were even permitted to come to the table that way. However, Mrs. Amerul did require that they take off their hats.

The Scarecrow of Oz was observed to have necklength light brown hair—but given the current fashions that fitted right in. Beenie went on talking in her normal voice and nobody seemed to find it odd that she brought her fork or spoon up to what was obviously a canvas mouth. The food went right on nourishing her/them:

But what to do when bath time came? That was easy: Beenie just took off the Scarecrow and draped him on a chair. The girl was celebrated for not caring who saw her in the altogether and as she said from the comfort of the big old steaming tub, “We’re going to be pretty close, Scarecrow. I guess you better know the worst—about how I look.”

“That’s all right, my dear,” assured the canvas-and-denim costume from the chair. “I’ve often done duty as night-time bedroom guardian for Princess Dorothy of Oz and over the years have glimpsed one thing and another.”

“Princess Dorothy!” sighed Beenie, applying the bar of soap under her armpit. “I’d love to meet her. What’s she like?”

The Scarecrow ignored the question and went for the wish. “Maybe you can. One day I’ll have to think about returning to Oz—and of course you’ll be along.”

Beenie stared. She hadn’t at all thought that far into the future. But having taken on being the canvas man’s alter ego she knew in her heart of hearts she was never going to be able to abandon him lightly to a dismal destiny of flatness and immobility. The unique masquerade would have one day to be resolved equitably—and where, probably, but in Oz?

The Scarecrow was Sabrina—and vice versa—all summer

long. What fun they had, doing as one all the things that little girls and scarecrows like to do. The family and household intimates got used to seeing, instead of three young girls, two young girls and a somewhat miniature figure that resembled a bird-scarer effigy. But when September rolled around Beenie had to present her other self with a dreary ultimatum. "I can't go to school wearing you," she announced mournfully. "It just isn't done. Not before Hallowe'en anyway and then only for a day—or two, at most."

The Scarecrow wept: tears of air. He still didn't have any straw stuffing to provide substance for lachrymation. They'd tried it once: somebody proposed that if they stuffed with straw the imitation Scarecrow costume with the live Scarecrow cut-out sewn to the front of it, they'd have pretty near an approximation of the old original vital straw-man as he was in Oz.

It didn't work. Try imagining that just the front quarter inch of you is alive and all the rest of you dead weight. You couldn't hold yourself up. Stroke victims know exactly how it feels. They get over-weight, fall down, and the viable portions of their anatomy are quite incapable of hoisting the whole person to its feet again. So it was for the 'portionally' alive Scarecrow of three dimensions. He had to have his Beenie to stand up in.

But now to crise.. Sabrina promised to run home every day after class and put on the Scarecrow. At least he'd be alive and kicking all evenings—and nights too. Beenie wore him instead of pyjamas and the happy Scarecrow experienced another first: how it felt to sleep. Lovely. Funny how some of the most enjoyable hours of our life are spent unconscious. The Scarecrow, as opposed to lifeless, which is quite a different situation, had never been unconscious before. It was a new—and better way to get through—the nights.

He got to eat breakfast too, that newly acquired facility and treat. But then it was time to 'deporre la giubba'. Neither the Scarecrow nor Beenie knew Leoncavallo. The girl's dad did and he could hum "Pesta la giubba" but he didn't really know what 'pagliacci' meant, yet here he was, sitting across from one at the

breakfast table. It was a 'figure made of or stuffed with straw' — and only by extension a clown.

The Scarecrow made it until the end of October, dull as it was lying draped over a bed or depending from a clothes hanger all day long. He could just about manage twiddling his fingers or toes on his own. (Were there toes inside those pseudo-Munchkin boots? I kind of doubt it.) But by October thirtieth he was ready to throw in the towel.

"This is no kind of life, Beenie my dear," he protested. "How is it to end? You're growing too, but I can't grow with you. Soon I'll only come up to your chin, and how will it look then when we go out together? It will seem like you've got two heads."

But Beenie was sanguine. "Oh, something'll turn up, I'm sure. This is all so magical: having you alive to talk to. Surely it can't end in tragedy."

"But we've got to make plans!" the Scarecrow insisted.

"I've made some," returned the girl. "Tomorrow I'm wearing you to school. It's Hallowe'en and we're allowed to come in our costumes. And then afterward there's a big parade in Morristown with all the school kids from miles around taking part—and everybody else that wants to dress up. It'll be marvelous fun. The folks are taking us. And maybe we'll win a prize!"

So the Scarecrow had to be content with looking only so far and no farther than tomorrow—as Beenie did.

Beenie was eleven and not tiny for her age. Therefore she could well fill out the costume of a Munchkin farmer that someone had once stitched together to approximate the semblance of the Scarecrow of Oz as W.W. Denslow portrayed him: at least a head taller than the circa-six-year-old Dorothy Gale.

Therefore it was not thought outré that Sabrina was allowed to march alone at evening in the big Hallowe'en parade at Morristown. Of course it didn't start out that way. Ginny was somewhere in the crowd as a cowgirl and Toni was a fairy queen in a fluffy creation of tulle she had run up herself—with a very convincing magic wand Dad had lathe-turned in his workshop and painted silver. But it was all so exciting and Beenie's attention was not at all concentrated on sticking close to her siblings.

No, what she concentrated on was being the Scarecrow. From the very first moment when she had lain down and had the living 'pattern' of the straw man sewn over her (with slits cut in the sides of the canvas head to hook over her ears and hold the face in place), she had felt (like Cathy with Heathcliff): 'I *am* the Scarecrow.' It was thus no effort at all now to walk as if stuffed with straw and talk in a rusty hayseed voice. Her nose was flattened away to nothing, pressed under the Scarecrow's canvas face, and one of her eyes appeared distinctly larger than the other. What's more, she could see better with its extra things.

For instance, now. She could see the people around her being impressed (in spite of their own masquerade) with the realism of hers. They spoke about her as "he"!

"Doesn't that scarecrow look *real*!"

"Yeah. Hard to believe it's just a kid dressed up."

"He reminds me of..."

"Ray Bolger?"

"No. Bolger and Haley never *really* looked like anything but men in funny outfits. But this one: you'd swear that's real straw sticking out of the seams."

"It is! Here. It came right out when I gave it a tweak."

“And the nose? Is that really just paint?”

“I’m *not* going to feel of it to see! Scarecrows have got feelings too.”

“I think you’re right. At least this one.”

Scarecrow-Beenie (or ‘Scarebee’) didn’t hear that. She/he (or ‘s/he’) was too busy concentrating on seeing. She took in so much with that extra eye size. It was as if she could see that little bit more of things she really wasn’t supposed to be likely to see. The crowd around her now: the kaleidoscope of varied colors: pirates, milk-maids, cavaliers, Turks, deep-sea divers. She could see what they wore but also how they wore it. That pierrette girl: her feet were killing her in the tiny ballet slippers on the hard macadam of West Dover Avenue but you would not know it merely from the electric smile on her face. And that couple there: she in the balloon trousers and he in the fez: they genuinely admired Scarebee and she could tell, though they seemed to be trying not to stare.

Or this boy beside her at the moment. What was he? Oh, a Chinaman—though those round deep-set eyes looked anything but oriental. The limp black glued-on moustache was all right though, and the pigtail attached under the pillbox cap. That pea-green sateen jacket was a sight: straight out of J.C. Penney’s junior-miss department, with loving-hands-at-home additions: somebody had embroidered the stand-up black collar. Somebody hoped he’d win the best-costume prize, no doubt. Oh, she could see now: he hoped it himself! He kept looking around to see if anybody noticed him. Beenie couldn’t see that anybody did.

Somehow she was touched—and right away she determined not to show it! It was clear to her at once: the face she inspected was one stretched lightly and non-committally over a vibrant swarm of emotions that must never be revealed. It was a face you wanted not to be there: it was not handsome and it was troublingly full of longing and would-be affection that would never be requited. If only it didn’t exist... to bother one. At the same time though, she could see it was a face that would go on

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for a long time.

Beenie didn't want to know — and yet somehow she did.

"Hi," she said, moving nearer. The 'China boy' looked at her. That expression could be a smile or a frown.

"Having fun?" Beenie pursued. "It's exciting, isn't it?"

"Yeah," said the kid, and shivered.

"You cold?"

"Oh, not exactly. But this jacket is thin, and it's October here. I'm not used to it being cold in October. If I could run I'd probably warm up."

This speech puzzled Beenie but she didn't let on. "We're *not* moving very fast, are we? But I guess they figure the fun lasts longer at this slow plod... You live around here?"

"No, the Palisades — for a while anyway. My family brought me over. This Morristown parade is supposed to be one of the sights to see."

The girl found this last expression also a little curious but she fastened on another angle of the boy's talk to reply to. "Yeah, my family too," and she went on to tell him about life in Flanders.

"You'll probably win," said the boy when she had finished. Beenie could see he had given up any pretension to winning himself — whatever it was.

"What's the prize exactly?" she asked. "Have you heard?"

"Don't you know anything?" the China boy blurted in rude kid fashion. "There's a lot of Prizes — well, two or three. But the Grand Prize is a trip to anywhere in the world."

"Wow. I know where I'd go!"

"Where's that?"

"Oz!"

To the Scarecrow-girl's astonishment the youth's response (again incomprehensible) was to burst into laughter.

"What's so funny?" demanded Beenie, now really miffed.

"I'm from Oz," said the boy.

When the crowding and noise and refreshments and announcements were over with, it appeared that Sabrina Amerul had been awarded the Morristown Annual Grand Prize for Most Realistic Hallowe'en Costume. The judges kept saying "he" as they declared the winner over the loudspeaker system. That's how convincing the little girl had ended up being, in the guise of a fully mature man of straw (or anyway canvas). The cheers of popular acclaim were deafening, even if all too soon over.

Beenie was surrounded by her congratulatory family. How thrilling: they all exclaimed. But what about the practical aspects of the prize? The award was a Morristown City Council voucher, good at any reputable travel bureau, for one first-class round-trip airline ticket to any destination in the world. Fabulous.

"But just *one* ticket," objected Mom. "They must not have expected a child to win. An unaccompanied child is not going to be allowed by a doting family to go off gallivanting around the world. Not alone..."

"Oh, I won't be alone," reassured Beenie eagerly. As the costume procession had budged slowly along the two miles of West Dover she'd had plenty of time to lay plans—just in case she *did* win—with her new friend from Oz.

"From Oz!?" Beenie had shrieked. "You gotta be kidding!"

"No, that's what we call it. Especially kids." But the China boy pronounced it 'Aw-z' (as in 'Aw, shucks') rather than, as purists would have it: 'Ah-z' (as in 'Ah, how wonderful').

"Tell me more: What's it like in Oz?!"

"Pretty neat. I miss it a lot. Good thing I'm going back for Christmas. I'm not used to cold weather and my folks don't want me to have a New York winter."

"Is it always warm in Oz?" asked Beenie. But that was a silly question. She knew from her reading that it was always the just-right temperature in the magic land. If ever it did snow it was only hot popcorn.

"Yeah. It can get coolish where I live but never downright cold."

"What's it called where you live?" asked the girl again. What if it should be Fuddlecumjig or Mount Munch?

"The town? Ivanhoe."

"Oh? Well, I guess that's Ozzy enough." Dad had read the girls the Scott romance. "I suppose everybody goes around in armor there—and tries to force newcomers to be knights and ladies...?"

"Hunh? No, not that I ever noticed. What ever gave you that idea?"

"That's the way they do in Oz. You must know that. But I suppose *some* towns could be more normal... What's your name?"

The boy gulped. "'Mose'," he admitted.

Beenie didn't bat an eye. 'Moses,' she figured. The boy didn't *look* Jewish—exactly. But Mose seemed used to this kind of embarrassment when his name came up. "It's Danish," he informed, not that that told Beenie much. "It's a family name. I guess it *is* kinda, funny."

'Not funny exactly,' thought Beenie. 'Unusual though.'

They went on talking as they marched: about Mose's Christmas travel plans and Beenie began to nourish a secret dream. If she won—just *if*—she'd choose to go to Oz! Maybe she and Mose could even travel there together.

So that was what she proposed now when the family left the judges' stand and headed off to the parking lot. Mose was trailing along. He too was to rejoin his family by the family car. He'd congratulated Beenie heartily, scarcely recalling that he had briefly hoped to win. When you were close you never won, no matter how honorably you tried. And when she said, "I won't be alone: I could go on the same plane with Mose!" he nodded conspiratorially.

Mom Denise dropped back to discuss the idea with the young 'Chinaman'. Sure, he said. He didn't mind Sabrina. It would be fun if she could go on the same flight. They'd be company for each other and could look out for each other. And he bet he

could even get his aunt and the housekeeper back in Ivanhoe to invite the little American girl to stay for a week. Beenie's family was not about to countenance a stay abroad of any longer than that. And after all it did seem a shame to pass up the unlikely marvel of the windfall win, though they didn't have the means for anyone else in the family to go along as chaperone.

There were high-level conferences on the upcoming jaunt, by phone and at get-togethers in both Flanders and Leonia. Time flew and then it was December fourteenth and both families were at Newark airport to see off the young voyagers. These two had got nicely acquainted by now, playing together while the parents discussed earnestly all dodgy aspects of the mooted jaunt. "Of course," Mrs. Maxton had said. "Sabrina will be more than welcome at Carn Avenue. I'll write my sister-in-law tonight."

Beenie eyed the big red Qantas plane sceptically. "I wonder why I feel so scared," she said but only to herself. Aloud she said, "KAHN-TAHS? That's hard to pronounce, without a U after the Q."

"Oh, we just sound it as if it were there anyway," dismissed Moss. "KWAHNT-us."

"I suppose it's a—what do you call it?: an anagram of Oz names—"

"Clever girl!" praised Mose.

"Q and A.would be from 'Quadling' - and N from *all* the four Oz country names. I suppose T could be from 'Emerald City'. But what about S...?"

"What are you on about?" demanded the boy from Oz, who however had never read an Oz book. "The letters stand for 'Queensland and Northern Territory Air Service'." He also didn't know the difference between an anagram and an acronym.

Beenie was mystified. "That doesn't sound very Ozzian!"

"It's *pure*—er, Ozzian. Australian, that is. Couldn't be more so."

"Australian?" puzzled the girl. "I thought you were from Oz?"

"Awz—Australia. Same thing—isn't it?"

“What’s with this ‘Oz?’” said Mose in the window seat near the front of the plane. They’d specified non-smoking: environmentalists and health nuts already at their young age: Mose’s girl companion seemed depressed and he was trying to distract her.

Sabrina attempted to smile but it was hard. She wasn’t going to Oz after all! How crushing. The Scarecrow for his part had retreated into full comatosity at the news. The indivisible companions just looked for the moment like a little girl in a rather odd masquerade costume. “Mmff,” said Beenie.

“Well, tell me about it,” insisted Moss as they flew over West Virginia.

“You really mean you never read an Oz book?” So far the girl ventured to speak, piqued in spite of her disappointment.

“No. What are they about?”

“There are forty of them,” revealed Beenie. “Actually, it’s more or less the same story all the time. But they’re—I don’t know why—somehow so fascinating. Dad says, with all the reading he’s done, no books ever captivated him like the Oz books.”

“Gosh,” admired Mose. “Well, tell me about ‘em.”

“Wel-l-l,” drawled Beenie, relenting. “I suppose I could tell you an Oz story. Dad made it up—one time for a bedtime tale for us a long time ago. And he’s retold it a couple times since. He always called it:

“A Generic Story of Oz”

“‘Generic?’” wondered Mose. “What’s that?”

“Oh—sort of typical. Like ‘basic’ ... ‘no frills’ ... ‘average’.”

“Yeah? Okay. Go on.”

“GRRRAAAHHHHH!” screamed Vitreous the Evil One. “I’m going to conquer Oz!”

“Oh, please,” muttered Taffeta, wife to Vitreous and hence Queen of Tralinda. “That’s only been tried about a thousand times and it’s never worked. Now if you want my advice, I’d tell

you to—”

“*SILENCE!*” roared Vitreous, throwing his crown at his wife. “I’ve just achieved magic power. Nothing can stop me! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-hah!!!”

Meanwhile, in America, Timmy and Tammy were walking home from school past the munitions plant when suddenly it blew up. The vast explosion, instead of killing them, merely blew them to Oz. When they came to, they didn’t know where they were, but they started walking and soon they came to a city.

“Let’s go in and see what it’s like,” suggested Tammy, and Timmy was agreeable.

“Ah-ha!” yelled a guard as the two children presented themselves at the city gates.

“We’re going to imprison you,” said a second guard.

“And make you slaves,” said a third.

“Take them to the king!” said a fourth.

Soon Timmy and Tammy were on their way to the royal palace, walking under guard through the streets of a strange-looking city full of strange-looking people doing strange-looking things.

“Ah-ha!” cried the King when he saw the two children. “We’re going to imprison you.”

“And turn them into slaves,” suggested the king’s Prime Minister helpfully.

As it turned out, a lot of weird stuff happened which allowed the two children to escape. They resumed their walk and presently came to another strange-looking city, where—surprise!—they decided to go in and see if things were any better there.

“Ah-ha!” yelled a guard as the pair entered through the city gates. “We’re going to imprison you,” announced a second guard. “And make slaves of you,” added a third.

“Take them to the king!” commanded a fourth guard. Thereupon Timmy and Tammy were conveyed to the royal palace.

“Ah-ha!” cried the King at the sight of the two children.

“We’re going to imprison you,” said the king’s adviser, adding, “and make you slaves.”

By this time, of course the children realized that they were in the land of Oz.

Again weird things took place and the young travelers were able to escape from their dungeon. Before long they came to another strange-looking city.

“Let’s not go in this time,” proposed Timmy. “I’m getting kind of tired of being captured and made a slave.”

“But we have to,” said Tammy. “It says right here that it is customary for travelers to Oz to be captured and made slaves by the people of three strange-looking cities.”

“Hey, where did you pick up that copy of the *GOGTRAA*?” yelled Timmy.

Tammy confessed that she had found in the pallet-side table at their latest prison cell the *Gideon Oz Guide to Required Adventure Activities*. Sure enough, there it stated quite clearly that new arrivals in the Land of Oz—such as themselves—simply had to go into at least three strange-looking cities of strange-looking people engaged in strange-looking activities.

Well, Timmy and Tammy were sticklers for following rules, so presently they found themselves entering a *fourth* strange-looking city and being captured by the strange-looking inhabitants.

“Hey, this isn’t fair,” whined Tammy. “We were only supposed to be captured three times.”

“Maybe we’ll get extra credit,” muttered Timmy dryly. “What’s next on our standard adventure?”

According to the *GOGTRAA*, read Tammy, they were now supposed to discover and try to stop an attempt to take over Oz.

“Whaddya mean ‘*try* to stop it’? Aren’t we allowed to succeed?” protested Timmy. “Skip to the end and see if it tells.” But it appeared that the *GOGTRAA* would (magically) not allow itself to be opened at a page later than that corresponding to the adventurers’ current predicament.

Having duly escaped again, the dauntless duo walked on and in the course of their search for a would-be current conqueror of Oz they came across a cave full of interesting objects.

"Wow!" yelled Timmy. "A rug that grants wishes! Hey, a pebble that grants wishes! A chair that grants wishes. A wish-granting lamp!" Wishing tables, cups, rings, shoes, belts, hats, pens, and wands were scattered about in rich abundance. Eagerly Timmy began to cram everything he could into a huge bag. The bag granted wishes too.

"Hold it," said Tammy. "The *GOGTRAA* says to take only one," she read out, and waved the *Guide* in Timmy's face. Grumbling, the boy put back most of his loot.

"I'll keep the wishing pebble," he proposed. "It's small and I can carry it in my pocket."

The twins then left the cave and began asking the animals they met if they had any information as to where the intending conqueror of Oz was to be found. In the end they were successful in finding out about King Vitreous and before long they were standing before that tyrant in his throne room.

"Nice to have you in my power," whispered Vitreous suggestively. "Now that you're in my grasp, my conquest of Oz can be completed. Nothing can stop me!"

The two children stood frozen in fear. Then Tammy had an idea. "Use the wishing pebble, Timmy!" she gasped. "Use the pebble to stop him!"

"Oh, yeah! That's right," answered Timmy and fumbled in his pocket for the magic stone. "It's right here!" But his words came too late.

Poof! A cloud of pink smoke appeared in the throne room and two little girls walked out of it.

"Why, it's Ozma and Dorothy," said Tammy, recognizing them from the pictures in the siblings' collection of Oz books. The two princesses had of course been watching the entire adventure in the Magic Picture and they now stepped in at the crucial moment to save the day. With a whispered command to the Magic Belt Princess Ozma solved all problems in an instant.

BEENIE IN OZ

After that the united group trooped off to a big party at the Emerald City, where Timmy and Tammy related their adventures to all who would listen. And let me tell you, Dorothy and Ozma were just amazed at all the strange and wonderful things that had happened even though they had already seen it all in the Picture. The wishing pebble was put in the emerald safe next to the wishing pills, wishing powders, wishing jewels, wishing... (well, you get the idea).

Meanwhile, Timmy and Tammy were socializing with all the famous Oz characters.

“Glad you could come here,” said the Scarecrow.

“Nice to meet you,” said the Tin Woodman.

“I was afraid for a while when I heard about your imprisonments,” said the Cowardly Lion.

“Glad everything’s all right now,” said Jack Pumpkinhead.

“Blah blah blah,” said Betsy Bobbin.

“Blah blah blah,” said Trot.

“Blah blah blah,” said Cap’n Bill, said Scraps the Patchwork Girl, said Ojo the Lucky, said the Shaggy Man, said Billina the Yellow-Hen, said the Hungry Tiger, said the Woozy, said Hank the Mule, said the Sawhorse, said Button Bright...

At last, when everyone—including the Lavender Bear—had said something, Timmy and Tammy were wished home by means of their own magic pebble, and everything went back to being just as it had been before, no matter how unsatisfactory that might have been.

The kids weren't lucky. Or rather they were: at least luckier than the person on their left and two of those in the seats immediately behind—for when the cabin pressure failed on that famous flight and blew out the imperfectly sealed forward right door, ejecting with the latter the five passengers seated nearest, the children were not killed outright.

Could the magicality of the brought-to-life Scarecrow have had anything to do with it? Our sources are silent on that issue, but the fact remains that when little Beenie mercifully lost consciousness in the first instants of the realization of the horror of her situation the personality of the learned straw/canvas man took over. A fall from *any* height could be no threat to him, nor was it here.

He concentrated his considerable acumen on the issue of how to help the other four falling erstwhile plane passengers. With extreme sadness he saw three of them plummet away from him and onward downward to a cruel fate. But Australian Mose was quite nearby in the air and the Scarecrow used Beenie's body strength to flap and flail and maneuver himself nearer to the falling yelling boy and succeeded in grabbing his arm.

"Hold onto me! Seize hold of me!" screamed the Scarecrow. "Wrap yourself around me as much as you can!"

Mose didn't need further urging and as skilfully as he could in the extraordinary circumstances he grappled himself to the body of the Scarecrow girl. Away they went on falling with just incredible verve.

While they fall, let us steal a glimpse at a lonely island far out in the Nonestic Ocean. There Malchor the Evil Wizard was plotting to capture slaves to do his bidding. His only problem was that he was all alone on his island and did not know any transportation magic. He would have to wait...

And Mose and Scarecrow-Beenie fell and fell. Beenie's brown hair streamed out with the force of the wind created by their own passage and the two children had never been in greater

danger.

As if that weren't enough, when they got lower they fell into the buffetings of a sea-surface storm which had appeared from nowhere. In fact it was a miracle of (continued) good luck. A wind is the one thing a hurtling body can encounter without being smashed on impact. The children's vertical fall was arrested by a violent horizontal wind current. They were blown and battered almost into renewed insensibility but when they finally struck the water it was not with the force to be expected in a plunge from eight thousand feet.

"Look out!" screamed Mose.

"I don't want to die," sobbed the revived Beenie in utmost terror.

Then they were nineteen feet under.

Fortunately both children were good swimmers, so merely being in water over their heads did not cause them to panic. They surfaced, found each other, and Mose seized Sabrina's hand in a gesture of comfort, but he said little. He was as terrified as she.

And still their luck was not out. A QANTAS seat cushion floated near them and they used every ounce of energy to battle through the waves to reach it.

An hour later a life jacket bobbed along not far away, and now they had each a thing to cling to.

All through a night the pair floated and moaned and suffered. In the early light of the false dawn, which the Arabs call "the wolf's tail", they saw that a large and very dark cloud bank had formed in front of them.

"The current is taking us right into that thing," growled Mose. "I don't believe in anthropomorphizing but I'd call that black thing out there threatening."

"I don't like it either but there's no way we can avoid it," returned Beenie in a shaking voice, the product of fear and sheer exhaustion.

In conformance with Mose's gloomy prediction, the current wafted the drenched children straight into the heart of the cloud

bank. Although one would expect a sensation of moisture inside a dark cloud near the surface of water, what our two adventurers felt was, instead, a tingling sensation all over, as if they were being drawn through a magnetic field. They saw a haze of green and then everything went black for them for several seconds.

When they came out of the cloud the kids were still lost at sea, but the situation was somehow subtly different. The water looked much bluer and the sun shone bright. Altogether matters appeared more cheerful than when they had entered the cloud bank.

“Oh, my gosh! A ship! Oh, please, let them see us!” bellowed Mose, and got a hefty swallow of salt water for his pains. He was not too pleased at that but in the main his mood was much improved when the old-fashioned-looking ship was seen to change course to head toward them and their pitiable bits of saving flotsam.

When the ship drew near, the children found it was piloted by none other than the famous Captain Salt. When Beenie saw (and recognized) him, she knew immediately that they were within the sphere of the Land of Oz and that this must be the Nonestic Ocean. How the Pacific had turned into it she couldn't explain. Now the only thought in the two castaways' heads was to get on board that ship.

“At least we won't need to take another bath for a week,” exclaimed Beenie brightly as the two were hoisted onto the deck.

“Are you trying to be funny?” grumbled Mose. But that was just nervous reaction to the terror and stress of the past twenty hours. There was no room for bad feelings as the pair virtually kissed the captain's hands. They were safe! and not only that but they appeared to be in (or at least near) the Land of Oz and Beenie figured that something nice might now begin!

Everything Mose had read concerning adventures on the high seas turned out to be, for the most part, false. Shipboard life was hard work. Since there were only three of them, the crew had to work constantly. Mose wondered how Captain Salt managed when he was the only one aboard. When the boy mentioned this Sam Salt burst into laughter.

"Princess Ozma and the Wizard of Oz gave me a full set of automatic equipment," he reported too late. "I can run the ship with no work at all: I just shut the machinery off because I thought you would want the full excitement of working at sea. How 'bout that, me hearty!"

Mose's face turned a beautiful shade of rose. It was evident that despite the efforts at goodfellowship on all sides he was still not master of his too sensitive emotions.

Still laughing, Captain Salt went below to turn on the automatic machines. Once this was done, Mose and Beenie had plenty of leisure for fun and games and other pursuits not usually mentioned in Oz books. They learned how to use a sextant and to do dead reckoning.

One fine day (the usual state of the weather in and near fairylands) Beenie sighted a small island with an unusual-looking city that stood near the shore. "How exciting!" she called from the bow. "We really ought to stop and see what it's like."

"I don't know," muttered Captain Salt doubtfully. "They might capture us and try to make slaves of us."

"Oh, but we don't have any choice. It says so right here in the—"

"Not on your life!" bawled Mose and he ran over to make a grab at Beenie. The girl's account of the *Gideon Oz Guide to Required Adventure Activities* had made quite an impression on the thoughtful boy. What was his wonder when they had come across a copy of the *GOGTRAA* itself during their new-found leisure to explore the captain's bookshelves!

Incontinently the young Australian seized the volume from

Beenie's hand and hurled it overboard. Not for him was any engagement in an endless cycle of 'We're going to imprison you and turn you into slaves and/or creatures just like us.'

A little bashfully Beenie agreed with Mose's reasoning (or emotion), and the ship sailed past the island. This caused regret to the spy-glass-equipped natives, who, indeed, had been planning to act in true Oz fashion, as Mose had predicted, and enslave whoever might land from the good ship Crescent Moon.

In the end the ship arrived at an island that appeared deserted. This was not the case, of course, and Malchor the Evil Wizard (you remember him, don't you?) was living at the top of the island's central mountain.

Beenie, upon seeing the peak, and considering her dislike of climbing (though she was an excellent runner), stared at the pile of rock as if it were some kind of vast personal insult.

"Come on, Been, think of it as a chance to broaden your horizons," suggested Mose. "The view will be incredible from up there." Sabrina chose to regard this as an attempt of Mose's to be amusing, but she was *not* amused.

Presently, with Captain Salt bringing up the rear, the three were trudging up the rocky path. After some time they came to the tower of Malchor, standing its lone watch atop the mountain.

Malchor acted instantly. He welcomed them to his stately abode, then quickly trapped them as soon as they had entered. "Now I shall have three slaves to do my bidding," he gloated. "You may begin your slavery by—"

Unfortunately we will never know what Malchor's plans were, for at that very moment a cloud of pink smoke filled the foyer. When it cleared, there stood (who else?) Princess Ozma of Oz and her royal entourage. It seemed that the girl ruler actually did use that method of appearing out of nowhere. The pink smoke was not just a fancy invention of Beenie's story-teller dad!

"Why, Malchor, you're just awful mean. How could you?" said Ozma's girl-in-waiting, taking over as usual, and shaking a reproachful finger at the terrified Malchor.

Ozma also put in at least two cents' worth: "It is against the laws of Oz to practise magic," she stated authoritatively. "You must know that, yet you practise anyway."

"But we're not *in* the land of Oz," whined Malchor.

That fact made little difference to Ozma, who was about to say so when Captain Salt, tricorn hat in hands, ventured to put in: "With all due and fitting respect, your highness, what is the large notion behind your grace's sudden apparition here, at least a thousand miles from your capital?"

Ozma was framing an equally ceremonial reply when young Mose entered the lists. He'd never read an Oz book but recognized the Queen of Oz from the description in the story his chum Beenie had retailed. He'd also been annoyed in that same story by the girl ruler's high-handed entrance as a *dea ex machina* applying her untimely happy ending. Furthermore he did not feel the awe that would have constrained any properly constituted Oz buff. He blurted, "Yeah, Miss Princess, why don't you butt out? We were having fun 'til you came along." Trust Mose always to say the spontaneous frank thing—and then be made to rue it down the ages.

Princess Ozma was shocked to her shoes, so much so that she incontinently vanished in a reverse 'un-puff' of smoke and so abruptly that her entourage didn't make it along with her.

"Goodness," said Dorothy, "how awkward," while poor Beenie, 'hostess' at this long-dreamed-of and so untimely terminated interview, virtually skwatted in contrition. In deep abasement she tried to make amends for her chum's misprision.

"Oh, Princess Dorothy... *it is* Dorothy, isn't it?" There hadn't even been time to make introductions! "Can you ever forgive us?! This is terrible. I've been looking forward all my life to this moment, and now—" The unfortunate girl burst into tears, while Mose began on a lifetime attempt at expiation of the sin of *lèse majesté*.

“Scarecrow...?” said Dorothy uncertainly.

Beenie clapped a hand to her brow. Good heavens. She’d been forgetting who she (half) was: Quick as a wink she altered attitude and in the Scarecrow’s rustly voice she said, “Hnhhnh, just my little joke, my dear. Everything is a bit inexplicable, isn’t it? You’re wondering how I got here...”

“Even more, I’m wondering how you grew lovely long brown hair in three weeks,” interrupted the Princess ironically. “That’s when I saw you last—as you were off, in the company of Nick Chopper, to return to your corncob house.”

Curiously, Beenie’s clap to her head still had not reminded her of the dead giveaway. The Scarecrow’s hat was the first thing that had blown away in the instant of the man/girl’s ejection from the wounded aircraft. [Oz collector fanatics may want to do a search of the floor of the Pacific off Funafuti for a unique Oz-related artifact.] There was now not the slightest point in pretending to be the actual original Scarecrow, no matter how striking the resemblance below the hair-line.

Beenie/Scarecrow suggested they pass into the reception room of Wizard Malchor’s tower, where they all took seats. The sorcerer scurried about providing herb tea and crumpets, and then Beenie told the tale of her adventures: the miracle in the Flanders attic, the splendid prize for the beat masquerade costume, and the disaster at eight thousand feet up.

Dorothy got to the kernel at once. “But how amazing,” she cried, addressing the Scarecrow side of Beenie’s personality (Scarecrow number two, as she began to think of him now). “You—that is, your picture—came to life just like that? You have no idea how?”

“No, princess,” said the canvas man ruefully. “Not a clue. But let me say this—which may seem somewhat startling: I remember the whole of my life as a living straw man in Oz up to the time I sat—stood, rather for my portrait by Mr. Neill. After that everything is a blank until I found myself speaking to this

young lady—" Here he pointed to himself: presumably his 'better half'. "—in the attic of the house in New Jersey."

"It *is* strange," agreed Dorothy, with finger and thumb to face thoughtfully. "And you say this happened early last summer? That's just when the Wizard did his marvelous refurbishing job on you—on 'Scarecrow number one', that is to say!" she ended in some confusion.

"We will just have to go to Oz to find the ex-plan-a-tion," said Tik-Tok the Clockwork Man, who, of Ozma's erstwhile entourage, had not spoken until now. The Doubtful Dromedary had *still* not said anything.

"We'll certainly have to go to Oz," agreed Dorothy. "We can't stay here on this near-desert island—delightful as it is," she hastened to add to their host, who had dropped all blustering and was now doing his best to ingratiate himself with his obvious superiors.

Beenie was still inclined to sniffle. "Oh, I feel so bad about Princess Ozma. Do you think she'll ever forgive us?"

"Oh, sure," said Dorothy insouciantly. "Actually, the little faux pas may have been an eye-opener for Her Grace. I'll admit quite frankly that Ozma has—well, I won't say 'spoiled'—more than one adventure by turning up too early and resolving everything. I think she's probably looking at us in the Magic Picture at this very moment, but she may hold off doing anything and see how we get on by ourselves."

The New Jersey girl allowed herself to be a little cheered by those words and took her part in the plans the group made to move on.

"Watch your head. Here I come," warned the voice of Jack Pumpkinhead as he flourished a pie plate still steaming from the oven. Jack was watching his own head as he advanced; it was in the pie.

"To think that you can even bake," commented the Scarecrow. He was paying Jack a visit and had got as far as the front porch of the pumpkin bungalow before the pie arrived.

"Yes, I can bake even too," bragged the pumpkinheaded man. "At least I think this is equally done on all sides."

"Shall we test it?" asked the straw-stuffed man and he pressed ever so lightly with his cottongloved finger. "Seems perfect. I think you've put your all into this pie."

"No, only my head," corrected Jack and he began to hum "I Poured My Head into a Pie", an old hit from the thirties—for of course the raw batter of a pumpkin pie is a near-liquid. "Nothing goes to waste here," he resumed.

"You can say that again," concurred his friend.

"Nothing goes to waste here," dutifully obeyed the hollow-headed one.

The situation was this: that Jack Pumpkinhead had just carved himself a new head after selecting one of the larger varieties from his pumpkin patch. This event coincided with the arrival from the Emerald City of his ancient friend the Scarecrow on an errand. It was all most opportune. The straw man's mission was to place an order for a baker's dozen of pies for the use of Princess Ozma at some social do she was planning. The superannuated head would do for a test run. Of course to fill Ozma's order Jack would use field-fresh specimens.

"Mmh," breathed the Scarecrow as the two sat at a rustic table under an apple tree and admired the confection, "looks almost good enough to eat. I wish we could."

"Are you kidding?" retorted Jack P. "I'm not a cannibal."

"Interesting question," mused the thoughtful Scarecrow. "I wonder what you call a creature that eats itself:

Autoprophagous?"

At this point another voice was heard from. The renowned Sawhorse of Oz had come over table-side (still pulling the Red Wagon). "Don't I deserve a piece of pie like anyone else?" was what the horse said. He couldn't eat it any more than the others could but simply made a practice of requiring his rights at all times.

Jack hastened to slice him a wedge. He'd been cutting into the pie to test its doneness, flexibility, and tensile strength.

"I love all sorts of pies," confided the wooden horse, "especially key lime pies. Their green color reminds me of the Emerald City—which, by the way, shouldn't we be returning to?" Sawks was always happiest running somewhere, not staying in one place.

Jack ignored him and addressed the Scarecrow. "I'm so glad you are feeling yourself again." Word of the straw man's brief indisposition and spectacular cure had spread all over Oz.

"Who, me? I never felt better in my life. Just look: I'm the picture of my former self."

This was quite literally true. The Scarecrow's painted likeness from the royal gallery at the capital, combined with the Wizard's super-glue, was doing its job just as programmed. The straw fellow was never again to feel fatigue.

"Maybe you should change your name now," suggested the Sawhorse, as he trod around in his piece of pie. He had the idea that baked pumpkin was a sovereign polish for gold hoofs.

"What's wrong with being called 'Scarecrow'?" the bearer of that designation wanted to know. He'd always been known as just "Scarecrow", or "the Scarecrow", or "His Majesty the Scarecrow". Only his most intimate friends sometimes called him "Scarekers" in English pet-name fashion (as 'Twickenham' is called "Twickers" or someone named 'Cottrill' is termed "Cotters").

"Oh, nothing very much. Only, if Mr. P. can change his head, you might like to change your name. It's not very appropriate. You haven't scared a crow in decades."

That seemed to exhaust the subject, but in fact the Sawhorse had hit upon a tender point. Secretly the Scarecrow would have liked to have the name 'Lawrence'.

"Can I have another piece?" asked the Sawhorse.

"*May* you have another piece'," corrected Jack, ever the language purist. "Certainly," he went on, and dished up a good quarter of the remainder of the pie, into which the Sawhorse stepped daintily.

"Tell me, Jack," said the Scarecrow, making conversation, "how do you know when it's time to change heads?"

"Oh, I just do it automatically once a month," informed Jack. "The old head is good and moldy after thirty days."

Just as the Scarecrow was about to say something or other in reply an apple dropped out of the overspreading tree and landed in the Sawhorse's newly bestridden portion of pie. "Drat!" exclaimed the horse.

"Sqwack! sqwack!" sounded a cry from the branches above. "Look out below!" A second apple fell into the unserved portion of pie on the rustic table.

"Knock it off!" commanded the Scarecrow.

"I'm just trying to get your attention," squawked a bright chartreuse creature from a limb at a safe distance.

Jack P. was the peace-maker—or shall we say, the piece-server. He mildly offered the parrot newcomer a slice of pie. "Might as well," he urged. "You're the only one of us who can actually eat it."

The Sawhorse said nothing but "The blarney's spread too thick."

The three friends didn't at first know what to make of the new arrival. It was no one they knew. The bird was not slow to introduce himself. "I know *you*," he boasted. "And I'm the wizard Malchor's pet parrot. My name is Papuga."

"And who is the wizard Malchor when he's at home?" queried the Scarecrow. "I've never heard of him."

"A powerful enchanter who owns salt pans on the Isle of Estic!" At that the well-read straw man guessed that the isle

might lie somewhere in the *Nonestic* Ocean.

“But I’ve come here with dramatic news!” cried the excitable parrot. “Maybe even treasonous or criminal news. There’s another Scarecrow abroad! just like you—only get this!—with long brown hair.”

At that the Scarecrow scratched his bald burlap pate. “Then it’s definitely not me,” he opined.

“Oh, no, by no means,” reassured Papuga. “I realized that at once. I knew right away it was a case of *lése majesté*, you being an ex-king, of course. I knew there had to be laws here in Oz forbidding anyone to shape-representations of the royal Scarecrow. Just think: if imitations of you were placed out in fields to be blown at by wind and rain: why, it would bring your fame and glory into disrepute! I had to let you know that your shape was being taken in vain!”

The Scarecrow was inclined to take a less drastic view of the affair. “It would seem that Malchor’s domain is not in the land of Oz,” he pointed out. “Maybe Scarecrow-resembling creatures way off there wouldn’t be much of a threat. In any case, no laws of Oz, real or imagined, have been broken—at least until such time as the masquerader might come to this country.”

“‘Until’,” echoed Jack Pumpkinhead and the Sawhorse. They knew that Oz exercised a magnet-like effect on all who wanted to go there—and who didn’t?

The realm of Malchor was the entire (though that wasn't saying much) Isle of Estic. The isle extended only a few miles in each direction from the castle that dominated the central peak. Outside the castle walls, on a gentler slope than that up which our travelers had toiled, spread a great (magically) irrigated garden (Estic lay in the horse latitudes and it virtually never rained there) where Malchor grew strange herbs and curious comestibles that he hoped one day to be able to use to enslave people.

The enchanter also worked with fell substances, chiefly salt, that he gathered in salt pans that ringed the island's perimeter at high-tide level. He had to gather and process the product all by himself, his island domain being in truth so 'desert' except for himself and his hitherto faithful parrot.

Malchor believed his magically worked-over salt to be mind-altering, and he was dead keen to try it out. That was mainly why he wanted slaves. What was the good of mind-altering salt if you had no minds to alter? The Estic salt tasted like usual table salt but was blue. (Good thing actually: If 'our' salt was blue they couldn't confuse it in hospitals with sugar and serve it to infants who promptly curl up and die*.) The salt had a hallucinatory effect on those who ate it and it could produce a mental state like schizophrenia. Malchor knew; he'd tried it.

However, at the moment the wizard was trying furiously to impress his unexpected guests with his goodness, so he kept the bulk of his secrets to himself. He wouldn't hear of their leaving all abruptly and he laid himself out to entertain them in a style befitting the augustness of the visitors. A Princess, no less—and Malchor hated like fire that a Queen had escaped him. That very first night he threw a ball in their honor: well, as far as

* See Finberg, L., et al: "Mass accidental salt poisoning in infancy", *Journal of American Medical Association*: 184: 1963: p. 187
Gauthier, R., et al: "Accidental salt poisoning in a hospital nursery", *Australian Paediatric Journal*: 5: 1969: p. 101. Editor's note.

seven people (including a dromedary) can be a ball.

Everyone was expected to be in attendance but in the interval of waiting for the festivities to begin the various new arrivals grew very curious as to the appointments of the enchanter's tower keep where they so unplannedly found themselves. While Dorothy and Tik-Tok entered the library and became absorbed in leafing through Malchor's collection of books of magic, Beenie/Scarecrow and Mose sneaked away to hunt for the magician's laboratory.

"I wonder what kind of wizardry he does," mused Beenie aloud.

"Maybe he transforms little girls into scarecrows," posited Mose.

"Oh, that's old hat. I think more likely he turns little boys into frogs," returned Beenie as good as she got.

"Gee, I hope not."

"Shh! Someone's coming."

The two hid behind an arras that graced the wall of the stone corridor - but after a few minutes they came out again. "It must have just been the wind you heard," said Mose.

"Funny: I was sure I heard a kind of a rushing fluttering noise. There *is* a parrot around here, you know. Did you see it? right after we got here: during that awful scene down in the entrance hall—"

Both children blushed to remember it.

"It seemed to be as startled us we were at everything that happened," pursued Beenie. "I wonder where it's got to."

Now it was Mose's turn to shush. "Now I do hear somebody coming!"

The children ducked out of the passageway onto an opportune balcony and after a moment, peeping round, saw the black-robed Malchor sweep by, muttering to himself.

"Hnn, hnn!" he snickered. "Just one wee bite of the banquet food and the fools will be in my power."

Of course the intrepid adventurers had to know more about what foul plot their host was hatching so they did not hesitate

to tiptoe along at a safe distance behind the magician and they saw him enter the laboratory they had been in search of.

Used to solitude and not needing to watch his words, Malchor failed to shut the door behind him so our heroes had a clear view within.

Well, 'laboratory': it was more like a music room. Upon a sturdy oak music stand lay a leather-bound book to which the wizard directed his attention. Then he drew towards him a great gilt harp that was attached at the foot to a stone pillar. Beenie and Mose gasped (but not *too* loud). As Malchor began to play the harp visibly came to life and the children saw that it had not a foot but feet! of scrollwork, on which it now attempted to run away.

Like many people who are much alone, the wizard kept up a running vocal commentary with himself. "I'll learn your secret, Siko Pompus!" he crooned. "I should be able to do any magic a mere leprechaun can do. I too will conjure a pot of gold by my playing. Only: what's the tune...?"

The children stared, mystified, as Malchor strummed one melody after another. They sounded like Irish tunes, as far as the two listeners could determine: "Mother Machree", "When Irish Eyes are Smiling", "She is Far from the Land", "I am of Ireland", and funnily enough "Hello, Dolly". But if the player was performing them to some purpose that purpose did not appear.

"Drat!" cried the wizard and gave the strings a stinging slap. "I'll squeeze that magic melody out of you yet. Let's see now: I've got another book of *Songs of Erin*."

Malchor slid the instrument back to its apparent home position close to the pillar and left the chamber. The kids ducked back and under another convenient arras.

But the next person to come along the corridor was Tik-Tok, who approached calling out for the host magician. Instead he saw Mose and Beenie creeping out a bit shamefast from behind the hanging.

"Oh, it was you two I was real-ly look-ing for," declared the

mechanical man. "Do-ro-thy was won-der-ing where you were."

"We were trying to find Malchor's laboratory," Beenie/Scarecrow explained. "We're not really sure this is it ...and we haven't had a proper look at it yet. how's about if you let the Princess know you found us, Tik-Tok? and we'll be along right away."

When the copper man had toddled off the two explorers finally entered the laboratory/conservatory (in the musical sense) properly. Beenie at once darted to the music stand where it didn't take her long to find a little golden key that dangled and caught the light.

"I wonder..." she said to herself with a bright surmise and looked over speculatively at the goldgreen harp that might once, for all she knew, through Tara's halls...

But at that moment she heard the mysterious magician returning and she quickly dropped the key in the pocket of the Scarecrow kaftan.

"What, may I ask, are you two - so HONORED - guests doing here?" enquired Malchor with much hand-washing and every mark of obsequiousness.

"Princess Dorothy sent us to look for you," lied Beenie deftly.

A flurry of raindrops fell as the Scarecrow and Jack Pumpkinhead emerged from the pumpkin bungalow in the fruited field. Waiting outside was the patient Sawhorse; when he wasn't wildly galloping somewhere he could stand still for hours. The parrot Papuga was squawking away quietly to himself on the branch of the apple tree where he had remained since his arrival. He hadn't bothered to eat his proffered share of the jacks-head pie.

Suddenly the quiet mood was broken by a shriek from the far-traveled bird. "Yes, Malchor!" it cried, seemingly speaking to itself or at least not to anyone present. "I hear you, mighty master! Right! your Papuga is a naughty bird to fly away from Estic Isle. Yes, yes indeed! I'll come back at once. I am your humble parrot Papuga!"

Without a syllable of goodbye the bird launched himself on verdian wings and flew off in the direction whence he had first come.

The explanation of the curious passage was that at that moment Wizard Malchor was gazing at his parrot in a crystal ball (one of several in his possession). He could see the bird just as plain and incidentally could also see something of his surroundings. When he recognized the famous (original) Scarecrow and also the by no means uncelebrated pumpkin-headed man he knew at once where Papuga was.

"Good Papuga... nice bird: it's time to return home," he suggested insinuatingly. Then he blew into a little whistle specifically designed to be able to reach the ears of any familiar of the wizard's (Papuga was the only one) no matter how far away he might be. In fact, Papuga was fifty miles inside the land of Oz, not to mention the expanses of ocean, land, and desert he had had to cross to get to the pumpkin cottage. The whistle once heard was the command imperative.

"Goodbye, Papuga," muttered the Sawhorse for no particular reason, as the three friends watched the bird flutter

out of sight. The Scarecrow changed the subject by adverting to the shower, which he was glad to have been able to escape. And then Jack got into the act by saying, "Oh, look, here comes a rainbow."

In very fact, a beautiful graceful rainbow was arching over the pumpkin patch. When the foot of it touched the ground (minus pot of gold as far as any of those present could make out) a sprightly girlish figure could be seen dancing down the arc. She jumped off lightly, skidded on a wet pumpkin-but recovered with remarkable aplomb, and frolicked across the field toward the waiting spectators.

"Polychrome!" ejaculated both Jack P. and the Scarecrow, and the latter went on to call out: "You are always welcome—with or without a rainbow." The Sawhorse said nothing but "What's *she* doing here?"

"Don't be silly, Scareks," laughed the Rainbow's daughter, springing vivaciously to the side of the duo waiting on the porch. "You know I can't come to earth without the rainbow to bring me down... How is everyone?"

Courtesies were exchanged, then presently the Scarecrow began to go into detail about his siege of weakness earlier in the year and how the Wizard of Oz had solved the problem. "I've been bonded, you know."

"Oh? How does that work exactly?" enquired the rainbow maiden politely.

"Well, they cut up an original oil painting of me and glued it around what was left of my former self, then attached it all over indissolubly." Here the straw man pirouetted on one toe to display his person from all sides.

"You look fabulous: better than I've seen you in years!" bubbled Polychrome with enthusiasm. "I dare say you're fit for anything now."

"Oh, no doubt," agreed his ex-majesty, suddenly turning thoughtful. "I may have to put my fitness to the test."

Poly was appropriately piqued in her curiosity and asked to hear more when the Scarecrow related what had just tran-

spired. "I wonder," he posited to his friends: "Do you think I ought to go look up this person who's masquerading as myself? It could be quite a hoot."

"Why not?" put in Jack. "You don't have anything else to do, do you?, now that you've delivered Ozma's instructions."

"Well, no," admitted the straw man. "But then: how to get to the Isle of Estic? Sawks here couldn't transport me further than to the rim of the ocean—if that far."

"No, and anyway, after I get this pie order baked I'll need him and the red wagon to deliver them to our dear queen," summed up Jack Pumpkinhead.

"I know what," proposed Polychrome. "You could come with me, over the rainbow, and then we could ask Dad what's to be done."

In the circumstances, that seemed like the best plan and the Scarecrow was not long in falling in with it. "How do we get up the rainbow?" he asked Poly.

"The same way I came down," replied the Rainbow's daughter. "It's so easy—once you know how."

The sun glancing off still lingering clouds insured that the rainbow, still almost as good as new, was waiting in the wings and Polychrome gave 'Lawrence' Scarecrow a hand to lead him to it. He felt a bit selfconscious raising a foot to place it on an unsubstantial shimmer but when Poly did it and moved on higher the straw man ventured to do the same. Indeed! the rainbow seemed to operate like an escalator and gave an adequate foothold, at least to a flimsy figure of canvas and straw.

At the shoulder the two turned to wave at their erstwhile companions, who in turned waved wooden extremities.

Incidentally the assumption of Polychrome and the Scarecrow into the skies was also witnessed by one other. He happened to be the possessor of a magical all-seeing crystal ball.

"So that's, presumably, the real Scarecrow," mused Malchor. "Who then is this other—whom I'm currently sheltering?" He knew it was a little girl in disguise but how she

BEENIE IN OZ

came to be that way; what the magical mechanics of the transformation were, was as unknown to him as to young Sabrina herself. They all of them still had much to find out.

Several days had passed since the wizard Malchor had called his parrot Papuga back from Oz. Though apparently with alacrity the parrot had come back reluctantly and he dawdled on the way.

"Papuga, my pet! You've returned," cried the magician with false high spirits. "Trying to run away from poor old forlorn Malchor," he tsked. "You gave me quite a fright."

"Oh, no, no, I would never run away from Malchor!" squawked the bird with matching falseness. "Malchor always treats poor Papuga so nicely."

"The fact remains that you departed," the wizard pointed out. "What caused you to fly to Oz?"

"I was so scared!" declared Papuga.

"Of what, my little pet?"

"That Scarecrow!"

"The one here, you mean? Indeed: what could you find scary about it?"

"It has two heads—and four each of hands and legs! That's enough to scare me!"

"Come, come, you're not a crow. And our visitor is not a scareparrot."

"It's what's inside the apparent Scarecrow that frightens me. There's a little girl in there!"

This was no news to Malchor. *He* had waited around, unlike Papuga, to bear the whole story from the lips of Sabrina Amerul herself. He changed the subject. "So that was the genuine Scarecrow I saw you with in the crystal ball." He remained thoughtful, then held out a hand for the parrot to light on. "Come then, my naughty Papuga. Let us put you back into your cage."

"Oh, the cage! Not that! Not that!" squawked the luckless bird. After his taste of freedom the cage was now more anathema to aim than ever. The wizard shushed him and turned the key.

Thinking of keys, Malchor muttered to himself as was his

wont, "Somebody's stolen the harp-lock key. I just wonder who it was." But he wasn't really in much doubt. Idly he turned to leafing through the second volume of *Songs of Erin*. "Could it be 'Did Your Mother Came from Ireland'?" he mused.

A knock was heard at the door of the music room, then Princess Dorothy entered diffidently bearing a tray of snacks which she placed on a console table. "Oh, Mr. Malchor," she gushed, "I just can't get enough of your onion and garlic chips."

'No, indeed,' thought the wizard. 'That's the whole idea.' Aloud, he only expressed pleasure at his guest's approval of his culinary arts. "You may take a sack of the genuine Estic onions and garlic home with you when you go," he urged insinuatingly.

"Thank you! Oh, and please: teach me how to make the dip... But, I hope I am not interrupting you in anything..."

"I was only about to play upon the harp," Malchor demurred. "Irish themes are my favorite. Do you know any?"

"What about 'I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen'? I always liked that," offered the girl.

Malchor played it—to general applause by Dorothy and even the engaged Papuga, who knew which side his bread was buttered. '—But that's not it,' the enchanter constated to himself.

Dorothy suggested "The Store Outside Dan Murphy's Door" but had to hum it for the harpist, who for a moment was hopeful but when he had completed the rendition found no pot of gold about.

Polychrome and the Scarecrow kept mounting ever higher. It wasn't very long before they arrived at the high center point of the spectacular rainbow arch and there they found themselves standing before a great cloud castle.

Poly gently nudged the Scarecrow to step onto the cotton-wooleny cloud, which he found to have a delightful springy consistency. It was something like walking on a particularly inviting trampoline. They followed a path to great doors which opened mysteriously as the travelers approached.

Once inside the rainbow-columned hall they could make out a dais at the remote end and there on a chair of state (not really a 'throne', for Father Rainbow was not exactly the monarch of anything) sat a colorful ageless figure in varicolored robes: veils really, line thin sheets of mist. This was Polychrome's parent, but at the moment he appeared to be in conference.

Before the dais stood a tiny man no taller than a cheese box (you know how big they are!). He had bushy red whiskers, a green coat, and an old hat with a white owl's feather stuck in it. He was talking and gesticulating with wild gestures.

The newcomers guessed that the little man had himself only just been ushered in for he seemed to be at the start of a catalogue of woes. "It all happened this way," related the suppliant, in a brogue we will not attempt to convey. "I had just got at me ease on a hank of clover and was tuning up to have a go on the old harp when a rainbow appeared. Well, there *had* been a shower not that long before, so I put aside me instrument and stepped off to look for the pot of gold.

"Y'know, if there are two things that are linked up with pots o' gold, it'll be rainbows and leprechauns. But there's a difference. Rainbows come furnished with their own gold-pots that turn up fresh at each occasion. Not so with us leprechauns: We're obliged to find our own pots, and where if not at those rainbow ends—whenever we're lucky enough to be on the spot when one comes up—or down, that is.

"I, as chance would have it, was fresh out of gold, so I never hesitated a minute but was off to claim the one that was sure to lie nearby. Yes, and I found it too and was a-claspin' it to me bosom and turnin' back—when—"

Father Rainbow and the two newcomers (who had so far exchanged no more than a sketchy wave) were all agog at the tale. Nobody spoke while they waited for the denouement.

"—there was an almighty thunderin' o' great wings ahint me, and I turned to see the most awful big bird—or some'n—in creation. A griffin, I think it's called: as much lion as eagle—but so huge. Somehow I always thought griffins were only about the size of buzzards.

"The creature alighted and a black-robed figure leapt from its back and made straight for me. I knew he was after me pot o' gold but I swore to meself I'd be destroyed afore I'd give it up. But no: the bat-like shape sped to me abandoned harp end seized that up, instead.

"Oh, what a tease was this: should I save me gold and lose me harp? Or the other way round? I couldn't keep both: that was clear. Well, a pot in the arms was worth a harp in the bush. But I had a last string to me bow—if not to me harp.

"'Take the instrument!' I yelled, 'and the divvil take thee! But ye'll nivver know the tune that conjures up the gold!

"The black figure nivver paused but caught up me harp, bounded in one leap to the back of the griffin, and was off in a swirl of last raindrops," ended the story teller dramatically.

Soft-hearted Polychrome sprang impulsively to the wee leprechaun's side and put an arm around his shoulders. "There, there, don't fret," she pleaded. "Daddy will think of some way for you to get back your harp." Here she looked up beseechingly at the venerable figure in the chair of state.

"I don't think that is going to be very easy," discouraged the rainbow lord. "There seems no clue to who the cloaked robber might be, and though the incident has only just taken place—"

"Oh, no, your lordship," broke in the little elf in the midst

of his distress. "'Twas many a month ago!"

"Wot!" yelled Poly's pa, forgetting his dignity. "'Then why are you only now applying to me?"

"Well, sure, there was me pot o' gold," explained Siko Pompus (for it was he). "Before that was well and truly spent I had no need of rainbows. And if I missed the true old harp there was the comfort of all the pepper-cheese I could buy and the flasks of poteen and the charms o' the dancin' girls—"

Here Polychrome withdrew her consoling arm hurriedly. After all...!

The Father of the Rainbow admitted himself not only disgusted but stumped. "People always think," he remarked pettishly, "that because someone's the Lord of the Rainbow and goes back to the time of Noah he should have the answer to any problem. But frankly, I haven't a clue. What you need is someone with a lot of brains, a sort of master detective, to sort out the evidence and come up with leads..."

"'Tis jist as I thought," wailed the hapless leprechaun. "'Tis hopeless!"

"—unless, as I say," went on the Rainbow, "you can find somebody with a different mind-set than mine."

"Oh, father!" interjected Polychrome. "It sounds like you're describing the wise Scarecrow exactly. He's got the finest mind in six countries—and it's just been overhauled—along with his body—and made sharper than ever. Don't you think—"

Papa Rainbow was distinctly pleased with his most adventurous and experienced daughter. Once again she'd plucked his chestnuts from the fire. "The very thing, my dear!" he boomed. "We'll give this assignment to the famous and all-wise Scarecrow of Oz."

"What assignment is that?" stuttered the man of straw, for whom events had been moving at breakneck speed. And what about his own mission? They had not even got around to mentioning that yet.

"It may be dangerous and fraught with risks," warned the rainbow father.

"And...?" queried the straw man with a soupçon of impatience. "I'm no cowardy-custard—at least, if there's no fire involved."

"There's very little fire *in* this assignment," soothed the old gentleman. "Then you'll go?"

"Oh, very well," agreed the genial Scarecrow. "Maybe I can combine it with my own quest."

"What quest is that?" inquired the other solicitously.

But here young (well, actually she was incredibly old, though ever youthful-*looking*) Polychrome broke in and with a rapid spate of words briefed her parent on how the land lay. "So you see, Dad," she ended, "we're off to the Isle of Estic to check on this alternative Scarecrow. We were hoping perhaps you could drop a small cloudburst there and then we'd ride the rainbow..."

At this the rainbow elder turned to rifle through a rol-o-dex file on an end-table beside his chair. "Let me see: Mason, Eldorado... Emerald City: no. Equator. Erebus. Ah, here we are: Estic, Isle of." He scanned briefly. "Oh dear," he sighed. "No can do. It says here Estic lies in the horse latitudes. It never rains, you see..."

"Hmmf!" hmfed the Scarecrow, scarcely pleased. "Oh, never mind. Come on, Mr. Leprechaun—"

"Siko Pompus is the name, Y'r Worship," inserted the little man, wanting to get things right from the start.

"Psycho? Pompous?" wondered the Scarecrow. "I don't automatically go for folks that are either the one or the other. Still, we'll have to see how we get on..." Then he bethought himself of an important point. "Honored Lord of the Rainbow," he buttered up, "you cannot afford us a rainbow road to Estic, it seems, but could you spare us your daughter and my dear friend, Polychrome, to guide us on our way?"

"Granted!" cried the Rainbow in good humor, relieved to show himself to be of *some* use.

c h a p t e r s e v e n t e e n

Everybody was assembled once again in the dining room for the usual banquet. That would be: Princess Dorothy, Tik-Tok the Clockwork Man, Beenie/Scarecrow, Mose from Awz, Cap'n Salt of the good ship *Crescent Moon*, the Doubtful Dromedary, and our host, Malchor the Magician. Not present was Papuga Parrot who was still in Coventry in his cage. The party were all getting fat (those who could eat) from the forced feeding. Some awful inertia had got into them and they rarely spoke any more of leaving the spellbound island.

Tik-Tok, in fact, was the only one not partaking and even he sipped at a cup of lubricating oil. The rest sat with knife and fork at the ready for launching into the chicken calabrese that Dorothy, as honorary hostess, was passing round. As garnishes there were red-hot chili peppers, radishes, onion, and garlic, and to drink was a special punch that had not only a punch but a kick to it.

The Doubtful Dromedary, oscillating his jaws over a silver bowl full of raw onions, said, "I swear: these are the best-tasting onions I have ever eaten."

Princess Dorothy served herself another helping of chicken calabrese.

Captain Salt, perhaps not surprisingly, praised the blue salt, characterizing it as particularly toothsome.

Wizard Malchor urged everyone to eat hearty. He himself, if anyone had noticed, was being rather selective.

Beenie and Mose made great play of passing dishes back and forth but if anyone had paid particular attention he would have observed that they never actually swallowed anything, unless it be the odd tomato or an innocuous lettuce leaf. The kids had not neglected the tip they had overheard.

"I'll have another glass of the punch, please," said Dorothy.

"The salted herring are just the way a sea captain likes them," asserted Cap'n Salt. "Excuse me too," he went on, reaching over, "if I add a little of this satisfying blue salt to them."

Malchor congratulated himself on having taken a dose of *Tagamet A* to counter the potential effects of such viands as he did permit himself to touch. It would hardly look right if he himself never ate any of what he was so assiduously urging the others to gorge on.

When the feast at last drew to a close Beenie went straight to her appointed bedroom. It was in a tower, with a nice view out over the rather rocky sandy island. She took the precaution of locking her door. She was not fooled with respect to the island's overlord as a number of her companions appeared to be.

As she took off her scarecrow outfit the girl deposited on the rightstand the purloined key to the captive harp.

Suddenly she heard a sound behind her. Lock or no lock, Wizard Malchor was in her bedroom! For one mad moment she wondered if the enchanter had come to attack her, but then she remembered that nobody ever made sexual advances on eleven-year-old girls in Oz books, and she sighed with relief.

Malchor was calmly walking to the night table and picking up the key. "Now I wonder how this happens to be in your possession?" he said with a smirk.

Beenie was caught out.

"Never mind," soothed Malchor. "We all steal a little." That relieved the girl of the need of adding further lying to her tins.

"I have some plans for you, my winsome young lady," went on Malchor, "when presently the others leave me. I want you to stay here—on the Isle of Estic. I need your help... with something."

Giving the shuddering Beenie no time to reply Malchor disappeared through a two-way mirror in the wall.