The Shaggy Man of Oz

by
JACK SNOW
FOUNDED ON AND CONTINUING THE FAMOUS-OZ-STORIES by L. FRANK BAUM
Illustrated By FRANK KRAMER

To our
Lisa Babe
From mommie
Daddy
Dec 28,
1950.

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THIS BOOK
BELONGS
TO

The Shaggy Man of Oz

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THE FAMOUS OZ STORIES BY L. FRANK BAUM
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THE SHAGGY MAN OF OZ

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During the past few years, several readers have written me asking: "What ever happened to the Nome King's tunnel under the Deadly Desert?" The answer will be found in this book.

Everyone who has read the Oz books knows and loves Shaggy. He first met Dorothy in "The Road To Oz," and from that time on had a number of adventures in which he discovered such famous Oz personages as the Patchwork Girl, Ojo, Unk Nunkie, the Glass Cat, Betsy Bobbin and her Mule Hank, and many others.

So, it is about time that the Shaggy Man had an Oz book all his own—and here it is—faithfully recorded from the latest messages received from the Land of Oz.

Incidentally, you will recall that after Glinda laid down her Barrier of Invisibility, the only manner of communication between Oz and the Great Outside World was by radio. Well, now, your author of the Oz books has succeeded in tuning in the Emerald City on a specially built television set—his "magic picture." This has helped a great deal in the writing of this book—but not nearly so much as your own letters. So don't forget to write and tell me all your thoughts about the Land of Oz and the equally interesting countries surrounding it. Just now, important things are happening there which I hope to tell you about in another Oz book.

JACK SNOW

This book is dedicated to my Father
John Alonzo Snow

Santa Claus was good to me—
Gave me lots of things
Wrapped in dainty parcels
And tied with ribbon-strings.

I can't recall what lovely gifts
Within there chanced to be—
The wrappers and the ribbons
Were what are dear to me.

They breathe of sweet remembrance,
Of Love and Kindly Thought—
The things about my presents
That never could be bought.

And so, although I'm far away,
Love's message spans the space
And our two hearts are linked anew
Through dear old Santa's grace.

by L. Frank Baum
a hitherto unpublished poem
written to his Sister,
Mary Louise Brewster

The Shaggy Man of Oz

CHAPTER		PAGE
1.	The Twins Look In	13
2.	On the Isle of Conjo	19
3.	Omby Amby Bears Bad News	26
4.	Ozma Uses the Magic Belt	35
5.	The Castle of Conjo	43
6.	The Magic Airmobile	57
7.	Into Hightown	71
8.	The Lord High Mayor	81
9.	The Valley of Romance	107
10.	Lady Cue	121
11.	What Happened to Shaggy	135
12.	A Midnight Adventure	143
13.	Tom Goes to the Rescue	152
14.	The Valley of Love	162
15.	The King of the Fairy Beavers	170
16.	In Beaver Land	178
17.	The Tunnel Under the Desert	186
18.	The Flame Folk	194
19.	The Barrier of Invisibility	203
20.	At the End of the Tunnel	211
21.	The Wizard Is Excited	216
22.	Conjo in Control	227
23.	Twiffle Says Goodbye	234
24.	Twink and Tom in Oz	241
25.	The Black Bag of Magic Tools	247
26.	Twink and Tom Home Again	251

CHAPTER 1

The Twins Look In

"IT just isn't fair," declared Tom, staring unhappily through the window at the heavy rain pelting the lawn and garden about the house.

"Well, there's nothing we can do about it so we might as well make the best of it," replied Twink philosophically.

"But I wanted to go outdoors and play this afternoon—you know we have only a few more weeks until

school starts. Besides, I'm sick and tired of this old house and of every single thing we have to play with."

Almost as if he understood Tom's words, Twoffle, the children's wooden clown, tumbled over on his face in the corner where he had been standing neglected.

"Now look what you've done! You've hurt Twoffle's feelings," accused Twink reprovingly as she hastened to stand the funny little clown erect again in his corner of the room.

Twink was especially fond of Twoffle. The little wooden clown, with his hinged joints and gaudily painted features and clothing, had been a part of their lives almost as long as Twink could remember. He had taken part in many of their games, and being constructed of a fine grade of durable wood, he had outlasted many other more fragile toys that had come and gone.

Twink and Tom were twins. They lived in a large, comfortable house in the city of Buffalo, New York, with their Mother and Father and Rosie the cook.

This afternoon the house was very quiet. Twink's and Tom's father, Professor Jones, was at work at the University, where he taught young people all about electrons, atoms, molecules, and other mysterious matters. Mrs.

Jones was attending a meeting of her Club of Lady Voters. Rosie, the cook, dozed in her warm kitchen, nodding over the latest issue of a fashion magazine.

So it was no wonder the twins were a bit lonesome.

The rain streamed down the window monotonously and it seemed the afternoon would drag on forever.

Twink glanced at the clock on the mantle. It was a little Dutch cottage clock and the hands indicated it was almost three o'clock. Twink was struck with a sudden idea.

"Come on, Tom!" she called. "Look at the time. If

we don't hurry we'll miss Chapter Four of Buffalo Bill Rides Again!"

Tom came to life immediately, and in an instant both children were dashing down the broad stairway and into the library.

Here was the solution to their dull afternoon—a television set that Professor Jones had built himself and installed in the library. It was a very special set with a large "projection screen." The glass tube of the television set enlarged the picture on the screen. At three o'clock each afternoon Twink and Tom could see another chapter in the exciting moving picture serial of the wild west. The children were sure, of course, that Buffalo Bill had been named after their own city, and this made the picture all the more interesting.

Tom was busily turning knobs and dials and making adjustments. In a few seconds the big screen lighted up with a bluish-green glare and a moment later the pictures appeared. Buffalo Bill was ambushed by a wildly howling mob of Redskins who were on the war-path. There was no doubt in Twink's and Tom's minds that the famous scout would emerge unharmed while the Indians would take to noisy flight.

But just as Buffalo Bill brought his rifle to his shoulder and was sighting the nearest Redskin, something happened.

The flickering motion picture vanished from the television screen, and in its place appeared a picture that made the children gasp. It was one of the most beautiful scenes they could imagine: a peaceful, rolling meadowland, bright with all kinds of wild-flowers on which the sun shown down from a blue sky dotted with white, baby clouds. In the distance rose the spires and minarets of a great castle, glittering and glistening in the sunlight.

But it was not the castle or the sunny meadowland that held the children's attention.

Twink and Tom stared unbelievingly at a figure that stood in the center of the television picture looking out at them with the most familiar of smiles.

It was Twoffle, their wooden clown.

CHAPTER 2

On the Isle of Conjo

"GOOD afternoon, children," said the clown quite clearly and calmly.

"G-g-g-good afternoon!" stammered Twink and Tom.

The little clown suddenly doubled up with merriment and then gasped: "If you could only see yourselves! You're all eyes—positively bug-eyed if I ever saw anyone who was!"

"But what are you doing in the television picture?"

asked Twink, regaining a little of her composure.

The clown disregarded her question and was suddenly serious. "Come on," he ordered. "Conjo can hold this picture only a few minutes and you just have time to walk through."

"Walk through?" echoed Tom. "What do you mean?"

"Start walking toward the television screen and you'll find out," answered the clown. "Or perhaps," he added, "you would rather stay there where it is raining and you can't go outdoors."

"But you're only a picture," objected Twink.

Chapter Two

"Will you please do as I tell you and start walking toward the television screen?" asked the clown sternly.

Twink and Tom looked at each other questioningly. Tom smiled and shrugged. "Might as well try it—can't do any harm," he said.

"That's the spirit!" exclaimed the little clown, smiling again. "Just join hands and walk straight toward me."

Tom took Twink's hand and the two children slowly advanced toward the television screen. The screen was nearly five feet high—several inches taller than the children—and almost six feet wide. So vivid and real was the picture that Twink imagined she could really walk right into it.

Just as the children were about to take the last step that would bring them directly in front of the television screen, a sudden powerful gust of wind hit their backs and sent them tumbling forward.

"This is where we'll catch it," thought Tom, sure that the wind must have blown them into the screen. He sat up, fully expecting to see the expensive screen torn to shreds.

Instead he saw an expanse of rolling meadowland, and he felt the warm sun beating down on his head. Twink

was sitting beside him on the green grass, staring about in utter bewilderment. Before them stood the clown, smiling broadly.

"It's magic," breathed Twink, "pure magic."

"Well, it's magic, all right," answered the clown, "but I wouldn't say how pure it is."

"But what has become of our library, and how did we get here, and how can this be real, and why is it you're not upstairs in my room?" The questions tumbled out almost faster than Twink could ask them.

"One question at a time, please," said the clown, "and I'll try to answer. Your library is right where it always is. This can be real because it *is* real. And I am not in your room because I belong here."

"But, Twoffle," protested Tom, "we left you in Twink's room not fifteen minutes ago."

"You didn't leave me there, and don't call me Twoffle," objected the clown.

By this time Twink and Tom were standing up and brushing off their clothes. "But you *are* our Twoffle, you know," stated the girl. "We have had you for years and years."

"I am not your Twoffle—of all the silly names," said

the clown with some irritation. "I am my own Twiffle."

"Then how is it you look so much like our Twoffle?" asked Tom, who noted the clown was the same size as Twoffle and looked like his double.

"I was about to tell you," explained the clown, "that my name is Twiffle, and Twoffle is my third cousin."

"Oh, so then you know Twoffle?" asked Twink curiously.

"Know him?" replied Twiffle. "Of course I know him. And I also know you two very well. Many nights Twoffle and I have sat in your rooms with the moonlight streaming through the window and talked by the hour while you children slept."

Twink and Tom said nothing. They were busy thinking. All this was so strange and had happened so unexpectedly and suddenly that they were still bewildered. Tom's eyes were puzzled as he asked: "Just before we came through the screen, you said something about Conjo being able to 'hold the picture for only a few minutes.' Who is Conjo?"

Twiffle was suddenly alert. "That reminds me," he said, "that we must be on our way at once. Conjo is expecting you and we mustn't keep him waiting."

Chapter Two

Without another word, Twiffle started walking across the grass. The children followed.

"But who is this Conjo, and where does he live?" asked Twink.

"And what does he want with us?" added Tom.

Without pausing to look at the children, Twiffle answered: "Conjo is a Wizard—the sole ruler of this island, the Isle of Conjo. He lives in the castle you can see in the distance. What he wants with you, he will undoubtedly tell you himself." With this, the little clown flashed Twink and Tom a bright smile and then walked steadily on toward the glittering castle.

Twink found that she had no trouble at all in keeping up with Twiffle, because his legs were so short and his stride so small. She had plenty of time to pause occasionally and gather the colorful wild flowers that dotted the green meadowland.

CHAPTER 3

Omby Amby Bears Bad News

"OZMA! Where is Ozma? I must see her at once—immediately!"

The Soldier with the Green Whiskers had run all the way from the gates of the Emerald City of Oz to the Royal Palace with his whiskers streaming at least six feet behind him. Now that he had arrived at the palace, he was panting and wild-eyed with excitement.

"Whatever is the matter with you, Omby Amby?"

asked Jellia Jamb, Ozma's dainty little maid, eyeing the distraught Guardian of the Gates with undisguised curiosity.

Omby Amby groaned. "Something terrible has happened. I must report it to Ozma at once."

"Can't you give me just an inkling of what it is?" coaxed Jellia.

"No," replied Omby Amby firmly. The Soldier, who was Ozma's Royal Army, was rapidly regaining his composure—and his breath—after his wild dash through the emerald-studded streets of the city.

"Well, then come along," replied Jellia Jamb with a sigh. "I suppose I shall have to wait for Ozma to tell me what has upset you so terribly."

The little maid led the way down the corridors of the Royal Palace until she came to a large double door. Here she knocked and a moment later Ozma's voice answered: "Come in."

Jellia Jamb opened the door and the Soldier with the Green Whiskers followed her into the room. This was Ozma's library, where the shelves that rose from the floor to the ceiling were filled with Magic Books of Records. The little ruler of Oz was seated at a table, deep in the

study of one of the books. She looked up questioningly as Omby Amby stood before her. Jellia Jamb silently departed, closing the door behind her.

"Your Highness," began Omby Amby, "it is my painful duty to report a most regrettable misfortune."

"What is it, Omby Amby," asked Ozma with a kindly smile. "What has happened?"

"It's the Love Magnet, your Highness," gulped the Soldier. "It's been broken!"

"Broken!" exclaimed Ozma, rising from her chair. "How could that ever have happened?"

Chapter Three

"It was the nail," explained Omby Amby miserably. "If your highness will recall the Love Magnet has been hanging from a nail over the Gates of the Emerald City for many years—in fact, ever since the Shaggy Man came to live in the Land of Oz."

"Yes, I know," said Ozma.

"Well," went on the Soldier, "the nail must have rusted and this morning it snapped. The Love Magnet fell to the bricks of the Yellow Road and broke into two pieces."

Ozma's face was grave. "You brought the pieces with you?" she asked.

"Yes, your Highness, I did," replied Omby Amby. Delving into one of his pockets, he handed Ozma the two pieces of the Love Magnet, a small bit of metal, shaped like a horseshoe when it was whole.

Ozma held the broken Love Magnet in her hand, regarding it sadly. "It is too bad," she said, "that so wonderful a charm should be broken."

"Do you mean it can't be repaired, your Highness?" asked Omby Amby.

"Of that I am not sure," replied Ozma. "Perhaps the first thing we should do is ask the Shaggy Man to come here and explain to him how the Love Magnet came to

be broken, since it does, after all, really belong to him."

"I will go for him immediately," said the Soldier, turning to the door.

"You will find him in the garden with Dorothy and

Jack Pumpkinhead, who is trying on a new head," said Ozma, as Omby Amby made a low bow and closed the door behind him.

By luck, Ozma reflected, the Shaggy Man was in the Emerald City. She knew that Shaggy was fond of making long trips about the Land of Oz, exploring the little-known corners and regions of this most famous of all

Fairylands. Now he had just returned from a visit with his brother who was in the Gillikin Country. While she waited, Ozma recalled how the Shaggy Man had befriended Dorothy in the Great Outside World and had found his way to the Land of Oz in the company of little Dorothy. With him he had brought the Love Magnet, a curious magical talisman, which caused whoever carried it to be loved by all he met. Shaggy had gratefully accepted Ozma's invitation to make his home in the Land of Oz, and since he had no further need for the Love Magnet, Ozma had caused it to be hung over the Gates of the Emerald City so that all who entered might be loving and loved. Before she had done this, however, Ozma had wisely altered the powers of the Love Magnet so that the talisman did not automatically cause the person who carried it to be loved by all he met, but must be *displayed* by its carrier before the eyes of the person or persons whose love he wished to win. Thus, control of the powers of the Magnet were given to its owner. All this had happened so long ago that it was now duly written down in Professor Wogglebug's Chronicles of the Land of Oz.

Ozma's reflections were ended by the appearance of

Omby Amby and the Shaggy Man who had no idea that anything was the matter.

"Dorothy said to tell you, your Highness, that it's one of the best heads Jack ever had," the Shaggy Man announced with satisfaction, as he entered the room. "Dorothy's fitting it on Jack's body now."

"Won't you sit down, please, Shaggy Man?" invited Ozma.

The little Ruler's expression was so serious that the Shaggy Man asked with concern, "What is it, Ozma? What's wrong?"

Ozma answered silently by extending her palm on which lay the halves of the broken Love Magnet.

The Shaggy Man's eyes clouded. "Oh, that *is* too bad. I was very fond of the Love Magnet. It always made me feel happy whenever I entered or left the Emerald City. How did it come to be broken?"

Ozma explained in a few words what had happened.

"But can't the Love Magnet be repaired?" asked the Shaggy Man. "I should think it would be an easy matter for you or the Wizard or Glinda to put it together again as good as new."

"No," Ozma shook her head. "It isn't as simple as

that. A long time ago I looked up the history of the Love Magnet in my Magic Record Books and I found that, if broken, it could be made whole only by one person—the person who created it."

"And who," asked the Shaggy Man with deep interest, "is that?"

"It has been so long ago," admitted Ozma, "that I have forgotten who it was. But I can look it up in a few seconds."

Ozma moved to the far side of the library, where she selected one of the Magic Record Books and opened it on a table. After turning the pages until she found the one containing the Love Magnet's history, Ozma ran her finger down the finely printed column.

"Here it is," she announced. "The man who made the Love Magnet, and the only person who can repair it, is a Wizard named Conjo, who lives on a tiny island in the middle of the Nonestic Ocean."

CHAPTER 4

Ozma Uses the Magic Belt

OMBY AMBY had returned to his post at the Gates of the Emerald City and Ozma and the Shaggy Man had retired to the Chamber of Magic. Here were kept many of the most valuable magical instruments in all the Land of Oz.

"There is only one thing to be done," the Shaggy Man was saying. "I must take the broken Love Magnet to this Conjo and ask him to repair it."

"I am not sure at all that Conjo will agree to repair the Love Magnet for you," Ozma replied with a troubled expression. "You see, we know very little about this Conjo. He lives alone on this tiny island in the middle of the Nonestic Ocean and practices magic. There is no record of his actually misusing his magical powers. Nor, so far as we know, has he caused trouble for anyone. However, we have reason to believe he is rather selfish and thoughtless and that he might cause harm, without really meaning to, just to satisfy his vanity. Also, it might not suit his whim to mend the Love Magnet."

"What is the name of the island on which Conjo lives?" asked the Shaggy Man musingly.

"It is called the Isle of Conjo, and since it is many miles from the Land of Oz, I have no power over the Wizard at all. In fact," concluded Ozma, "that is the reason we here in the Land of Oz know so little about Conjo."

"Nevertheless," maintained the Shaggy Man, "I think I should go as soon as possible to this island and do everything I can to persuade Conjo to make the Love Magnet whole."

"Even after you crossed the Deadly Desert, you would

have several days' journey through the Land of Ev, and then you would only be on the shores of the Nonestic Ocean. So, I think it would be best, since you are determined to make the journey, for me to use the Magic Belt to transport you directly to the Isle of Conjo."

The Shaggy Man willingly agreed to this plan, stating that he was ready to leave at once.

"First," said Ozma, "let us have a look at the Isle of Conjo in the Magic Picture."

The girl Ruler swept aside the velvet curtain that hung over the Magic Picture when it was not in use. The picture appeared to be a peaceful, country farmland scene with purple hills rising in the distance. "Show us the Isle of Conjo in the Nonestic Ocean," said Ozma.

Immediately the picture shifted and changed. It now reflected a gently rolling meadowland with a great castle in the distance. Approaching the castle were a young girl and a boy, accompanied by the figure of a little wooden clown.

Ozma gasped in surprise. "Those are human children, Shaggy Man! What can they be doing there when my Magic Record Books state that Conjo is the only human being on the island? We can see that the clown accom-

panying them is a puppet, evidently brought to life by Conjo."

"Perhaps they are lost," ventured the Shaggy Man.

"But how would they get to the island? It is surrounded by miles and miles of ocean."

"I don't know," admitted the Shaggy Man, "but it is one more good reason for me to go there as quickly as possible—those children may be in need of help."

"I agree with you," said Ozma quickly. "You must find out what the children are doing on the island and see that they are returned to their homes. If you cannot do that, then you must bring them with you to the Land of Oz."

"Will you use the Magic Belt to transport us back to the Land of Oz?" asked the Shaggy Man.

"That will be impossible," stated Ozma, "since I must leave this afternoon to visit Glinda the Good. We are working on some extremely important magic charms in which the powers of the Magic Belt are needed. I am not sure how long I will be gone—perhaps for several weeks.

"However," Ozma went on, as she stepped to a heavy wooden chest, opened one of its drawers, and withdrew

a small object, "I want you to take this with you. It will enable you to return to the Land of Oz anytime you wish."

"What is it?" asked the Shaggy Man curiously.

"It is a Magic Compass," explained Ozma. "You will

notice that it is not round in shape like ordinary compasses, but is formed like a rectangle, as is the Land of Oz."

Shaggy looked at the Magic Compass and found that instead of being marked, North, South, East, and West as is the usual compass, it bore the words, Gillikin,

Quadling, Winkie, and Munchkin, which are the four countries making up the Land of Oz.

"Should you wish to return to any one of the four countries," Ozma went on, "just set the compass needle to the one to which you wish to journey. If you want to come directly to the Emerald City, you have only to spin the needle of the compass, and you will be here as quickly as the Magic Belt could bring you."

The Shaggy Man inspected the Magic Compass more closely and found that the pivot on which the needle rested, rose from a spot of green in the very center of the compass. This green spot, he knew, represented the Emerald City.

"But what about the children?" the Shaggy Man asked. "If I can find no way to send them home, I cannot simply leave them on the island."

"Of course not," replied Ozma. "If you think it necessary to bring them to Oz with you, just have them put their arms in yours; then spin the compass needle, and all three of you will be transported to the Emerald City."

The Shaggy Man placed the Magic Compass carefully in his pocket and said: "Perhaps it would be well for me to be on my way. There's no telling what will happen

on that island and those two children may need help."

Ozma slipped on the Magic Belt. "Goodbye, dear friend," she said, smiling fondly at the Shaggy Man. "Return as quickly as you can." Then she made the magic signal, and the Shaggy Man was no longer in the Chamber of Magic.

CHAPTER 5

The Castle of Conjo

"HELLO!"

Twink, Tom, and Twiffle stopped in their tracks. From out of nowhere had suddenly appeared a man of medium height with rosy cheeks, twinkling blue eyes, shaggy hair and clothing that, while it was composed of the finest silks and satins, was nevertheless a mass of shags and bobtails.

Twiffle was so surprised he found it impossible to

speak. Twink was regarding the stranger seriously. Suddenly recognition lighted up her eyes. "Oh, it can't be!" the little girl cried. "You just can't be the famous Shaggy Man of Oz!"

The Shaggy Man smiled. "Don't know about the famous part, but I am known as the Shaggy Man, and until a few seconds ago I was in the Land of Oz."

"Oh! Seeing you here made me think maybe this was a part of the Land of Oz," said Twink, who had begun to hope since the moment she had recognized the Shaggy Man.

Tom was regarding the new arrival curiously. "Yes," he said, "you certainly do look just like your pictures in the books. How did you get here so fast?—magic? I suppose the Land of Oz is quite a distance."

"Right, both times!" replied the Shaggy Man. "Ozma sent me here with her Magic Belt, and the Land of Oz is many miles away from here."

"Why did Ozma send you?" asked Twink.

"Oh, I have a little business with this Conjo fellow," answered the Shaggy Man.

"You have business with Conjo?" Twiffle had recovered from his astonishment. "Then you must forgive

me for not greeting you more properly. It is so seldom that we have visitors on the island."

"Looks like you already have two visitors," observed the Shaggy Man, staring at Twink and Tom.

"Yes, but they were expected—and invited," pointed

out Twiffle primly. "However, since you have business with Conjo, and we are on our way to see him, there is no reason you should not accompany us."

"No reason whatever," agreed the Shaggy Man. "I hope this Conjo has plenty of big red apples."

"Why?" asked Tom.

"They happen to be my favorite food, that's all," explained the Shaggy Man.

Led by Twiffle, the Shaggy Man and the two children were advancing over the meadow toward the Castle of Conjo. The sun was now setting, burnishing the spires and turrets of the castle with rich hues of gold and copper. The Shaggy Man judged they had less than a half a mile to travel to the castle doors.

"Don't you children think introductions are in order?" asked the Shaggy Man, "since you seem to know me already."

"Well," Twink began, "this is Twiffle who is a third cousin of Twoffle."

Twiffle bowed briefly and the Shaggy Man nodded.

"And this is Tom, and I am Twink. We live in Buffalo."

"Wait a minute," interrupted the Shaggy Man. "How did you happen to get a name like Twink?"

"Twink and Tom are not our real names," explained Tom. "Our parents named us Abbadiah and Zebbidiah."

"Why did they do that?" asked the Shaggy Man indignantly.

"Well," Tom went on, "they didn't expect twins—we

are twins, you know—and they couldn't make up their minds what to name us. So they just picked names at the beginning and end of the alphabet. That's how we came to be named from A to Z."

The Shaggy Man sighed.

"And then," Twink carried on, "I began to toddle when I was supposed to be still crawling, and everyone called me Twink, because I got from one place to another in a twinkle. Tom got his nickname in a funny way, too."

"I have always been interested in everything mechanical and electrical," explained Tom, "so when I was only two years old and took my toy phonograph apart to see where the little men and women who made the talking and music were, my Father said: 'Why, you're a regular little Tom Edison.' And so ever since then I have been Tom."

"At least they are better than those other names," said the Shaggy Man.

Conjo's castle loomed even larger, casting lengthening shadows, as the sun lowered behind it. In a few more minutes Twiffle had led them to a large door that was evidently the entrance of the castle. Hanging on the door

was a sign which Twink, Tom, and the Shaggy Man read.

CASTLE OF CONJO
WORKING WIZARD

"This way, please," said Twiffle. The door opened at his touch, and they entered.

All they could see was a vast corridor with doors on each side. At the end of the corridor was a handsome marble staircase that wound to the upper floors.

Twiffle's little wooden feet pattered busily down the polished marble floor of the corridor, until he came to an arch-shaped doorway upon which hung the sign:

QUIET!
WIZARD AT WORK

As they paused before this door with its strange admonition, the Shaggy Man and his friends heard a sound that reminded them of a buzz-saw.

"I wonder," ventured Twink, "if Conjo is building some new magical machine?"

Twiffle disregarded the little girl's question and proceeded to push the door which opened as easily as had the door of the castle.

Inside they found a vast, domed room. All around the sides of the room was a series of tables, work-benches, and tall cabinets. The tables and benches were filled with every kind of chemical instrument imaginable—beakers, retorts, test tubes, hundreds of bottles of different kinds

of colored liquids, crucibles, and a series of burners over which simmered vials and pots of chemical mixtures. From these rose vari-colored vapors, filling the room with a pungent haze. The cabinet shelves were crowded and jumbled with thousands of containers of various powders, ointments, and mixtures used by wizards in working

their magic spells. One cabinet contained nothing but books of magic recipes and formulas—everything from changing people into door-knobs to curing headaches.

The Shaggy Man and the children had scarcely glanced at all this array of tools and materials for working magic, when their attention was drawn to a huge divan that rested in the very middle of the marble floor of the great chamber. This luxurious divan was covered with the softest and most expensive of rich velvet robes and comforts. Curled up in a ball in the midst of the blankets and downy, satin-covered cushions was a little man. He was snoring.

Twink almost laughed aloud. So this was Conjo, the working Wizard! She realized now it was Conjo's snoring they had mistaken for the sound of a buzz-saw.

Twiffle seemed neither surprised nor disturbed to find his master sound asleep. The little clown trotted over to the handsome divan and, seizing Conjo by the shoulders, shook him vigorously.

The Shaggy Man was grinning broadly, and Tom was holding a hand over his mouth to suppress his laughter.

Sputtering and yawning, Conjo sat up on the divan. Since he was rubbing the sleep out of his eyes with his

knuckles, he did not see his guests for several seconds. Then he blinked, yawned widely, and smiling a little foolishly said: "Well, wiz my wand if it isn't Twink and Tom."

"You already know us?" asked Twink.

"Oh, goodness yes," replied Conjo, stretching lazily. "Twiffle has been telling me about you for years—ever since you were mere babies. I let Twiffle visit your friend Twoffle in your home, you know. Send him there by my magic," explained Conjo proudly.

Conjo was coming more awake every minute. "Jump-

ing June Bugs!" he exclaimed as his eyes fell on the Shaggy Man. "I didn't tell Twiffle to bring your Father along—or is this person your Grandfather?"

"Neither one," said the Shaggy Man with an amused smile. "Your magic had nothing to do with my coming here, Conjo. I came of my own accord."

"Came from where?" demanded Conjo, and then went on before the Shaggy Man had a chance to answer: "You were shipwrecked—that must be it, of course—you are a poor, forlorn castaway—a helpless victim of the deep and mighty ocean."

"No," contradicted the Shaggy Man, "I was not shipwrecked. I came here from the Land of Oz."

Conjo started. "The Land of Oz!" he exclaimed incredulously. "You mean the Emerald City—Ozma—Dorothy—the Scarecrow—the Tin Woodman—Scraps—Toto——" and then because he was out of breath the Wizard concluded weakly "and all of that?"

"I see you have heard of the Land of Oz," said the Shaggy Man, "so perhaps you will know why I am here."

Conjo, who was a fat, bald little man, not much taller than Twink or Tom, with a fringe of white hair about

his pink head, closed his little eyes, placed a forefinger on his cherry-like nose, and thought hard.

"You will just have to tell me," he said, opening his eyes and staring appealingly at the Shaggy Man. "I don't have a single idea. It usually takes several hours after I wake up before I get any ideas—and it is so seldom that we have shipwrecks."

"I told you," the Shaggy Man reminded Conjo patiently, "that I was not shipwrecked. I came here from the Land of Oz to ask you to do me a favor."

"A favor?" said Conjo, thinking hard. "Why, that is strange indeed! The last shipwrecked person who was here wanted me to do him a favor, too. He stayed several months and then wanted to return to his home. He asked me to make a boat for him. That was an easy trick. And because the fellow wasn't a bad sort at all, I made him a present—I gave him one of my newest creations—the Love Magnet."

"The Love Magnet," gasped the Shaggy Man.

"Don't interrupt, please," went on Conjo. "Not polite, you know. This shipwrecked person tied the Love Magnet onto the mast of his boat and set sail. Last I ever saw of him. Understand he encountered a whale, who, upon

seeing the man and the Love Magnet, became so fond of the fellow that he ate him."

Conjo wiped a tear from his eye.

The Shaggy Man wasn't sure whether the Wizard was serious or was poking fun at him. He decided to pretend, at any rate, that he accepted Conjo's absurd story, saying, "Well, apparently the unfortunate man's boat was blown ashore and an Eskimo found the Love Magnet, for it was an Eskimo who gave it to me, and I took it to the Land of Oz."

"My Love Magnet in the Land of Oz!" exclaimed Conjo.

"No," replied the Shaggy Man, "not *your* Love Magnet, since you gave it away. It now belongs to all the people of the Land of Oz. That is why I am here now. The Love Magnet has been broken. The favor I ask you is to repair it, since you, its creator, are the only person who can do that."

Twink and Tom had been listening with deep interest to this conversation. They had read about the Love Magnet and they were surprised to learn that it had been broken.

"Of course, of course, my dear Shaggy Man, for I

perceive that is indeed who you are—a quite famous personage of the Land of Oz," Conjo was wide awake now. "I shall be most happy to mend the Love Magnet if it can be mended. But surely you don't expect me to do so important and difficult a feat of magic without—a—er—let us say—a reward?"

CHAPTER 6

The Magic Airmobile

YES, that's it," said Conjo, nodding his round head so violently that his three chins rippled like the steps of an escalator. "You have asked me to do you a favor—a very great favor—so it is only just that I should claim a reward. That's fair, isn't it?"

Conjo was regarding the Shaggy Man with eyes from which was gone the somewhat foolish innocence.

The Shaggy Man considered uneasily. He was begin-

ning to remember Ozma's warning that Conjo was not to be trusted entirely. "What kind of a reward could I give you?" the Shaggy Man asked.

Conjo's finger shot out, pointing toward the Shaggy Man. "That," he said. "That in your pocket will be my reward!"

Involuntarily the Shaggy Man's hand went to his pocket in which rested the Magic Compass Ozma had given him.

"You must be joking," said the Shaggy Man incredulously. "The Magic Compass belongs to Ozma. And if I did give it to you how would I return to the Land of Oz? No, what vou ask is impossible."

Conjo's voice was wheedling. "Surely you don't think Ozma expected me to repair the Love Magnet for nothing, do you? I can assure you that Ozma will regard the trading of the Magic Compass for the repair of the Love Magnet an excellent bargain. Actually the Magic Compass is, by Ozma's standards, a minor bit of magic."

The Shaggy Man was perplexed. Perhaps Conjo was right.

"Supposing I do give you the Magic Compass—then how will I get back to Oz?"

Conjo's eyes glowed. "Nothing to it!" he declared. "You can return to Oz anytime you like—just as soon as I repair the Love Magnet, if you wish. Of course I would be happy should you care to remain my guest for a time, but the decision is entirely up to you."

"How do you propose that I return to Oz?" asked the Shaggy Man. "I can't walk across the Deadly Desert, you know."

"Ha, ha—ho, ho, ho!" Conjo laughed. "Walk across the Deadly Desert! Certainly not! He, he, he! You shall sail high across it—swiftly and safely! Come with me! I have something to show you."

Conjo wriggled about until his fat little body emerged from the cushions and silken coverings of the divan. As he stood up, the Shaggy Man and his friends saw that the little man was dressed in a loose robe of rich purple on which were embroidered stars, crescents, black cats, and the signs of the Zodiac. All these designs were in the brightest colors, while the robe flowed about him, secured by a golden cord tied about his middle. On his feet were sandals woven of silver thread, with toes that curled up like question marks.

"Come with me," repeated the fat little Wizard as he

waddled to the door, "and I will show you how you can sail away in a jiffy."

The Shaggy Man and the two children followed Conjo, while Twiffle remained behind, busily arranging and

straightening the royal cushions and comforters of the regal divan.

In the great corridor, Conjo paused before a small door that opened at his touch, revealing a cage-like little room.

"Step in," the Wizard invited his guests. "This is an elevator that will whisk us to the roof of the tallest tower

of the castle—an improvement over the stairway, up which I find it difficult to whisk myself in my present state of, shall we say—stoutness? Ho, ho, ho, ho, he, he, he!"

Conjo beamed good humor and friendliness as the elevator shot noiselessly upward. In a few seconds the door clicked, slid open, and Conjo led his guests to the roof of the great tower. From this height they could see that the Isle of Conjo was small indeed, for the blue waters of the Nonestic Ocean were visible in any direction they looked. The sun was a great red ball of fire in the west, but it would still be several minutes before actual twilight set in.

"And here," said Conjo, leading them across the roof, "is the means by which I propose you return to the Land of Oz."

The Shaggy Man and the children saw before them a most curious object. It might have been the body of an automobile, except that it seemed to have neither front nor back. Both ends of it curled up like a gondola. Nor did it have wheels. The flat bottom rested solidly on the roof. To all appearances it had no means of locomotion.

Conjo was regarding the strange object proudly. "Be-

hold!" he said, "one of my most ingenious creations—the Airmobile!"

"You mean to say," the Shaggy Man sighed, "that this thing is actually supposed to fly through the air?"

Conjo looked hurt. "You see before you," he said resentfully, "the most perfect means of air travel yet invented."

Tom broke in: "But how can it fly? It has no wings, no propeller, no jets—nothing but places to sit down!"

Conjo regarded the boy pityingly. "Do you suppose I would rely upon such clumsy and inefficient means of flying as propellers, wings, and jets? The Airmobile is the perfect flying machine. It repels gravity."

"It does what?" asked the Shaggy Man.

Conjo stepped to the machine and opened one of the doors. "Look," he said. "See these metal plates on the floor of the ship? They are gravity resistor plates. You must know," he went on patiently, "that it's the force of gravity pulling objects to the earth that causes things to have weight. Well, my gravity resistor plates overcome gravity when exposed. Hence the ship has no weight whatever."

"Yes," said Tom, "I can understand that. But what

makes it move?—backward and forward and upward, I mean."

"Oh, that," sniffed Conjo. "These are gravity *resistor* plates. They not only overcome gravity, but *resist* it.

The power of resistance forces the machine upward. The more surface of the plates you expose, the higher you will go. And you will notice," Conjo continued, reaching inside the ship and pressing a button, "that the metal plates are mounted on rods through their middle so that they may be operated like flaps or fins—and they rotate. Thus, if you tilt them in one direction, the resistance to

gravity forces you ahead in one way; tilt them in the other direction and you travel in the opposite way. Rotate them, and you can veer to right or left."

"If it works, it is wonderful," said the Shaggy Man doubtfully.

"Oh, it works to perfection," assured Conjo. "If it were not so late in the day, I would propose a little trip. As it is, I suggest that we go downstairs for dinner. Then I will have to leave you to examine the Love Magnet. We will all arise early in the morning, at which time you will have the pleasure of a journey over the island in my Airmobile."

Twink guessed that Conjo's dinner must have been prepared and served by magic, for there were no servants in the grand dining room into which their round little host ushered them. But the food was quite as elaborate and rich as the dining room itself. The Shaggy Man and the children were hungry and they ate heartily. Even so, they could not help noticing that Conjo ate nearly twice as much as the Shaggy Man. Shaggy was gratified to find a large bowl of rosey-cheeked apples in the center of the table, which made the meal a perfect one for him.

Conjo sighed with content, wiping his lips on a fine damask napkin.

"Inhospitable as it may seem," he apologized, "I must leave you now to see if the Love Magnet can be repaired. I

will examine it in my laboratory and tell you tomorrow if it can be fixed. Please give me the Love Magnet."

This the Shaggy Man did and Conjo waddled to the door, pausing to say, "Twiffle will show you to your rooms. I hope you sleep well. I know I shall, after I finish this work." Conjo was already yawning as he left the dining room.

A few seconds later Twiffle appeared in the doorway and invited Shaggy and the children to follow him.

The sleeping rooms to which Twiffle led them up the marble stairway were on the second floor and were beautifully furnished with every convenience and comfort. Twink and Tom's room contained two inviting beds, and Twink noticed that pajamas of just the right size had been carefully laid out. Conjo seemed to think of everything.

"See you children in the morning," said the Shaggy Man as he entered his room which adjoined that of Twink and Tom.

The Shaggy Man found his bed soft and luxurious, so he slipped off his shaggy clothes, carefully arranging them on a chair so that not one frill or furbelow was out of place, put on the pajamas which Conjo had also provided for him, and slipped into bed. Instantly the light faded from the room. More magic, thought the Shaggy Man a bit uneasily, for it had appeared to him that the light was an ordinary electric one which he might switch on and off at will. But moonlight was beginning to fall through the window, so the Shaggy Man sighed with content and in a minute was sound asleep.

Chapter Six

It was several hours later when the Shaggy Man stirred, and then sat up, wide awake. What had awakened him? He was sure he had heard a clicking sound—like the door of his bedchamber closing. The moonlight revealed that the door was closed just as he had left it. Shaggy glanced at his clothes on the chair. He leaped from bed and searched through the pockets of his clothing. He gave a gasp of dismay.

The Magic Compass was gone!

What was this? In another pocket, Shaggy found a hard metallic object, the Love Magnet, perfectly repaired with no trace of its ever having been broken.

The Shaggy Man sat down on his bed and thought hard. What should he do? For some reason Conjo had evidently entered the room, slipped the repaired Love Magnet into Shaggy's pocket, removed the Magic Compass, and left the room. It was the clicking of the door that Shaggy had heard. And Conjo had slightly disarranged Shaggy's clothes—that had called his attention to them.

What did all this mean? Shaggy was sure now that Conjo was not the jolly, straightforward person he pretended to be. Perhaps he was not exactly evil, either, but

he was so vain and scheming and selfish that he would bear watching. Then a sudden thought struck Shaggy and made him extremely uneasy. He had come to the Isle of Conjo of his own accord to seek out Conjo. But it was Conjo himself who had brought Twink and Tom there. Why? Were the twins in danger? What was Conjo's purpose in taking them from their home? It was up to him, thought the Shaggy Man, to find out and protect them if Conjo meant them harm or had some crazy plan that would endanger them.

Shaggy unhappily concluded there was nothing he could do now. In the morning he would find out if the Airmobile was everything Conjo claimed. Then he would try to discover Conjo's plans for Twink and Tom. Perhaps Twiffle could enlighten him. Shaggy sighed. Well, at least he did have the Love Magnet.

The Shaggy Man lay down on the bed and tried to sleep. After a long time he drifted into a fitful slumber broken by dreams in which Conjo sailed through the air, clutching the Love Magnet, and Twink and Tom were transformed into dolls, no larger than Twiffle. In his dream the Shaggy Man seemed to be bound with ropes to his bed, powerless to stop any of Conjo's mischief,

while Twiffle tugged at his bonds saying, "Wake up, Shaggy Man, wake up!"

Shaggy opened his eyes and stared. There was Twiffle at the side of his bed, shaking him and saying:

"Wake up, Shaggy Man, wake up!"

CHAPTER 7

Into Hightown

THE Shaggy Man was awake in an instant. "What is it, Twiffle, what is wrong?"

"There is no time to lose," whispered Twiffle. "Quick, get into your clothes, and I will arouse the children."

Shaggy dressed as speedily as possible, but no sooner had he finished than Twiffle, followed by Twink and Tom, now wide-eyed with excitement and fully dressed, appeared in the doorway. "Come," Twiffle whispered.

Silently Shaggy and the children followed Twiffle down the marble stairway to the elevator. The castle was not entirely dark, thanks to the bright moonlight flowing through the windows. They stepped into the elevator

which had a dim light of its own. Once more it shot up to the roof of the tower. Stepping out on the roof, Twiffle beckoned them after him. The clown made his way straight to the Magic Airmobile. He climbed in, motioning for Shaggy and the children to do likewise. They all squeezed into the contraption after him. Twink noted the cushioned seats in each end of the Airmobile

were soft and yielding—Conjo certainly liked comfort.

"Where are we going? And why?" demanded the Shaggy Man.

"There is no time to talk now," retorted Twiffle briefly. "Wait until we are well in the air."

"Do you know how to operate this thing?" asked Tom.

"I have watched Conjo run it many times. I am sure I can manage it," replied Twiffle.

The little clown was busy with the buttons which exposed the gravity resistor plates, and almost before they realized it, the Airmobile had risen gently from the roof and was moving silently through the night.

"Ah, that is a relief," sighed Twiffle as he watched Conjo's castle recede in the distance.

"But where are we going?" asked Twink, who was thoroughly enjoying the ride through the cool night air.

"The main thing," explained Twiffle, "is to get as far away from Conjo as possible."

"Then he is a villain, as I suspected," said Shaggy.

Twiffle nodded. "Conjo is a curious man. He repaired the Love Magnet because he couldn't bear seeing one of his own charms broken. He is very vain. Actually he doesn't care anything about the Love Magnet, which

has no effect on him, since he made it. He doesn't love anyone and he doesn't want anyone to love him. He came to this island many years ago. He wanted to be alone, since he disliked people and desired only to work on his wizard charms and incantations. He brought me to life merely to amuse himself and to have someone to talk to when he felt like boasting. Recently he has become restless. He has found that, after all, he wants someone before whom he can show off his magic tricks. But he hesitated to bring many people to the island, fearing they would steal some of his precious magic tools."

Twiffle paused and sighed. He went on, "I had made the mistake of telling him about you, Twink and Tom. Those visits he permitted me to your home, while you slept, were the only kindness Conjo ever showed me, so I don't feel I owe him any allegiance, even though he did bring me to life. Well, yesterday Conjo announced he was going to use his magic to bring you children to his island."

"I see," murmured Twink, "And so you have rescued us."

"I hope so," replied Twiffle. "After what I found out tonight I couldn't let you stay here. Conjo talks in his

sleep a great deal, and tonight he mumbled enough for me to learn completely for the first time what his plans are for you two children."

"What do you mean 'plans'?" asked Tom.

"Why, Conjo was going to make you drink a magic

potion that would wipe out all memory of your home, parents, and former lives. Then you would be content to stay on the island with him."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Twink, shuddering.

"And I suppose he never meant for me to return to the Land of Oz," said the Shaggy Man.

"Oh, no," replied Twiffle. "Conjo wanted your magic Compass badly, because it possesses a kind of magic that he knows nothing about. I believe he meant to transport you to the Land of Ev, where you could find your way back to Oz as best you could."

"But now," said Twink happily, "the Airmobile will take us all to the Land of Oz."

Twiffle shook his head. "No," he said, "I'm afraid it won't. Conjo is a clever wizard of sorts, but he is not powerful enough to invent a machine that will fly across the Deadly Desert."

"You mean this contraption won't carry us over the desert and back to Oz?" the Shaggy Man asked, greatly disturbed.

"No," said Twiffle. "I have heard of powerful birds managing to fly high enough to cross the Deadly Desert, but I know of no magic that can penetrate the barrier of invisibility that Glinda the Good spread across the deadly waste many years ago—certainly not Conjo's magic!"

"Then what shall we do?" asked the Shaggy Man.

"As I said," reminded Twiffle, "the most important thing was to get out of Conjo's power. The Airmobile

will carry us to the edge of the Deadly Desert, but no farther."

The Shaggy Man was silent considering. Once he had managed to cross the Deadly Desert in a sandboat—that had been before Glinda had laid down the magic barrier. But even since then, others had crossed the desert. So, the Shaggy Man didn't give up all hope.

The Airmobile was carrying them swiftly and silently through the night. Below them the waters of the Nonestic Ocean gleamed silver in the moonlight. There was just the faintest rocking motion as the Airmobile sped along. Perhaps it was this and the fact that Shaggy and the two children were deep in their own thoughts that made them all fall asleep before they knew it. Twiffle smiled and applied himself to the operation of the Airmobile. He had no need for sleep.

Twink was the first to awaken. The sun was well up in the sky, and the morning was bright and clear. She shook Tom awake and at the same time the Shaggy Man aroused himself. They looked over the side of the craft and saw below them a pleasant land of hills and rolling farmlands.

"The Land of Ev," announced the Shaggy Man. "We

HIGH TOWN

shouldn't be so very far from the Deadly Desert now."

Twiffle had looked up and was staring ahead of him in amazement. The little clown slowed down the Airmobile.

Directly ahead of them was a cluster of little houses and buildings—a good sized village—in the sky.

"What in the world can that be?" gasped Twink.

The Airmobile was moving very slowly as they approached the sky village. Directly before them, on what would have been the outskirts of the town, had it been on the earth, was a sign reading:

YOU ARE NOW ENTERING HIGHTOWN
Population—522
Altitude—approximately 15,000 feet (but it varies)

They could see people walking about among the houses, just as though they were on solid ground.

The Shaggy Man shook his head.

Twink and Tom were staring, fascinated.

The Airmobile glided silently a few feet past the sign. Then it jerked several times and came to an abrupt halt.

Twiffle looked puzzled. He pushed one button, then

another, and another. Nothing happened. Twiffle did it all over again, a bit frantically this time. Still nothing happened.

"It's no use," said Twiffle. "The Airmobile won't budge. We're stuck in mid-air!"

CHAPTER 8

The Lord High Mayor

WHILE Twiffle fussed with the controls of the Magic Airmobile, a crowd of curious people began to gather about the stalled aircraft. They were men, women, children, and even dogs, and they walked on the air easily and unconcernedly, as if it were the normal thing to do. These people were all very tall and exceedingly thin. The grown-ups were well over eight feet in height, while the older children averaged about six feet

tall. Perhaps the fact that they lived so high up had caused them to grow that way, too. Their clothing was what we would consider old-fashioned, but was neat and

well cared for. The women wore the brightest of colors which flashed gaily in the clear sunlight.

The people chattered among themselves, pointing toward the Airmobile, and several dogs barked excitedly. A loud voice exclaimed:

"What is the meaning of this? What is going on here?"

The crowd made way for the speaker who proved to

be a sour-faced, tall individual, wearing a frock coat and a high silk hat—a stovepipe hat, the Shaggy Man would have called it.

"Pardon us," began the Shaggy Man, "but I am afraid we are the cause of all the excitement. You see our airship has stalled just inside your town."

The tall man stared curiously at the occupants of the Airmobile as he said: "Of course your machine won't operate in Hightown. In fact a flying machine in Hightown is an utter absurdity—against all the town ordinances and rules. I must ask you to remove it immediately."

"Not very friendly, is he?" remarked Tom.

But Twiffle was interested. "What do you mean, sir, that our aircraft is against your laws?"

The tall man sniffed. "It should be apparent to you that the last thing in the sky we need is an airplane. Here, in this favored spot, we walk on air and are not compelled to crawl across the earth like worms."

"Yes," said the Shaggy Man, "we can see all that. But tell us, your Honor, do you think we would be able to walk on air as you do?"

The top-hatted man was distinctly flattered by the

Shaggy Man's mode of address. "Ah," he replied, "I can see that you recognize me as a person of importance. I am the Lord High Mayor of Hightown and my word here represents the highest law of the land. As for your

being able to walk as we do on the air, I see no reason why you shouldn't since in Hightown there is no gravity to pull you to the earth."

"What was that you said?—no gravity?" Twiffle was obviously excited.

"Exactly," replied the Lord High Mayor with great dignity. "Within the boundaries of Hightown, the earth

does not exert the least bit of gravity—none whatsoever."

"Then that explains it," said Twiffle. "The Airmobile operates on the principle of gravity, and since there is no gravity here, the craft is useless."

"What are we to do?" asked the Shaggy Man. "I am not sure I want to go walking around on the air, although these folks seem to take to it naturally enough."

"Tell me," said Twiffle, addressing the Lord High Mayor, "is Hightown of very great area?"

"Oh," exclaimed the Lord High Mayor, "it is simply enormous—no less than four square acres of the most delightful air!"

"Have you any idea, your Honor," asked the Shaggy Man, "how we can get our flying machine out of Hightown?"

"Oh, that's very simple," replied the Lord High Mayor. "Since your craft has only just crossed the boundary into Hightown, I would suggest that you get out and push the machine to the edge of the boundary—then push it a few inches more and it will be in the field of gravity again where it is equipped to operate."

"Of course!" exclaimed Twiffle joyfully. "Why didn't I think of that?"

The Lord High Mayor smiled with smug satisfaction.

"I'll adjust these gravity plates now," continued Twiffle, "so the plane won't fall when it passes the boundary." After he had pressed some buttons, he and the Shaggy Man and Twink and Tom climbed out of the Airmobile. The air seemed as solid under their feet as the earth. Nevertheless, this walking on thin air was a most curious experience, and in spite of themselves they found they were treading gingerly, as though they were walking on eggs.

The Lord High Mayor and the crowd of Hightowners that had gathered watched curiously as the Shaggy Man and Tom slowly pushed the Airmobile toward the boundary of Hightown. It was no task at all, since the Airmobile had no weight. They knew the sign that had greeted them as they entered Hightown marked the spot where gravity again exerted its pull, so they pushed the Airmobile slowly over this invisible line.

Zoom! Like an arrow shot from a bow the Airmobile darted upward. Far above their heads it continued its mad climb into the sky. So fast did it move that within a few seconds it was visible only as a tiny speck far above them.

"What in the sky has happened?" gasped the Shaggy Man.

"It is all my fault," said Twiffle despondently. "I must have exposed the gravity plates too much when I adjusted them. I was so afraid the plane would fall. When the Airmobile passed into the area of gravity it shot *upward*. Now it is lost to us forever." Twiffle looked as if he were about to weep.

"Cheer up, Twiffle," said the Shaggy Man. "Maybe we can get the Airmobile back." Shaggy turned to the Lord High Mayor and asked: "Since we can walk on air as well as you, couldn't we just walk up there and climb into the Airmobile?"

"You could, if you wanted to stop breathing," said the Lord High Mayor cheerfully.

"Why do you say that?" asked the Shaggy Man.

"Because," exclaimed the Lord High Mayor, "we have discovered that the higher up you go, the thinner the air becomes. At the altitude now attained by your craft, the air would be so thin that it would be unbreathable."

"Anyway," said Twink with a sigh, "the Airmobile isn't there any more."

They all stared upward. The girl was right. The

speck that had been the Airmobile had vanished completely.

"Wonder where it went?" said Twink.

The Lord High Mayor explained pompously. "Apparently your craft attained so great a speed that it shot off into space, beyond the power of gravity. From now on there's no telling where it will go."

"And astronomers will report that folks from earth are about to visit another world, I suppose," grinned the Shaggy Man.

"Too bad old Conjo isn't in it," grumbled Twiffle.

"The question is," said Tom, "what do we do now?"

"Right," agreed the Shaggy Man, as he turned to the Lord High Mayor and asked: "Sir, can you tell us how we can leave Hightown and proceed on our journey?"

"You wish to leave Hightown? Where could you possibly wish to go?" inquired the Lord High Mayor.

"Well, eventually we hope to reach the Emerald City in the Land of Oz," replied the Shaggy Man, "so we're heading for the Deadly Desert surrounding the Land of Oz. Then we'll have to figure out some way to cross the desert."

The Lord High Mayor stared at Shaggy in horror.

"The Deadly Desert!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to stand here in the sky and tell me you actually wish to go near that terrible, burning, dry waste of shifting, deadly sands, when you can stay here and enjoy the delightful perfection of the aerial climate of Hightown?"

"No," began the Shaggy Man patiently, "we don't like the Desert any more than you do, but in order to get to Oz we must cross the Desert. I assure you the Land of Oz has a climate just as delightful as that of Hightown."

"That is impossible!" declared the Lord High Mayor indignantly. "Hightown has the only perfect climate in the world, and now that you are here, you might as well stay and enjoy it."

"Wonder if he ever heard of California?" murmured Tom to Twink.

"We would like very much to stay and enjoy your climate, your Honor," replied the Shaggy Man, "but it is impossible. We must be on our way to the Land of Oz, much as we admire your high airs. So, if you will kindly tell us how we may leave your town, we will be much obliged."

The Lord High Mayor seemed to be deep in thought.

"Leave our town?" he said incredulously. "I don't believe it. No one could want to leave Hightown. It is the pinnacle of civilization, the highest point in high life ever reached by man. Sir, I conclude that I must have misunderstood you. It is beyond comprehension that you should wish to depart from this exalted community and go crawling about the lowly earth like a worm. I simply must have misunderstood you."

"There's nothing wrong with your ears," replied the Shaggy Man. "I said it and I'll say it again—we want to leave Hightown! Maybe we haven't advanced to the state where we can fully appreciate your hi-falutin' ways, and if you want to know the truth we actually like to feel the earth beneath our feet."

The Lord High Mayor stared at the Shaggy Man unbelievingly. There was a suspicion of tears in his eyes. "My poor, dear fellow," he said "How I grieve for you —to have such low tastes. The earth under one's feet—ugh! But then," he went on, brightening, "you have not been here long enough to appreciate the soaring virtues of life in Hightown. Once you have become accustomed to the lofty plane on which we live and the superiority we enjoy over earth-crawlers, I am sure that all the sod

in the world will not tempt you to put foot upon earth again."

"Please," said the Shaggy Man in exasperation. "Will you stop talking like the Chamber of Commerce and tell us how we can get back to earth?"

The Lord High Mayor eyed Shaggy narrowly. "Well," he said, "if you insist on leaving Hightown, you could walk to the boundary there, where gravity begins again, step over and fall very quickly to the earth. That is the fastest way I can think of leaving Hightown, but I wouldn't recommend it."

"No, no," the Shaggy Man assured him. "We have no desire to *fall* to the earth." Shaggy looked below him with a shudder. "We would be in no shape to continue our travels if we did that."

"Well, then, you see, it is all settled," said the Lord High Mayor with a beaming smile. "You will stay with us. Everything is settled and there is not the slightest doubt that you will find Hightown the Garden Spot of the Sky. Now, since I am the Lord High Mayor of Hightown, it is my elevated privilege and honor to welcome you and make you comfortable. You will please follow me on what is the most fortunate journey of your

life—for you are on your way to savoring the high and flighty life of Hightown."

There seemed nothing else to do, so Shaggy and his friends followed the Lord High Mayor, stepping gingerly on what seemed to them to be the airiest space. As the Mayor proceeded, the crowd of curious Hightowners made way for him and the little company of adventurers.

"Might I inquire," asked Twiffle, "where you are taking us?"

"Why, to my Air Castle, of course," answered the Lord High Mayor. "Since you are guests, you must be treated with the greatest courtesy. Later we will find a permanent dwelling for you."

They had now reached the center of the small town, and here the Lord High Mayor paused before a dwelling that was little different from any other of the houses which were scarcely more than bungalows, except that they were all quite high and narrow to suit the shapes of the Hightowners.

"This is your Air Castle?" asked the Shaggy Man. "It looks no different from the other houses."

"And why should it be different?" demanded the Lord High Mayor. "Here we all live in Air Castles. You

people who crawl around on the earth just dream of them. We are privileged to enjoy them." This last was said with an air of great pride.

One thing did distinguish the Lord High Mayor's

dwelling from the others in the town. Directly in front of it there stood a handsome flower pot in which was blossoming a beautiful magnolia. The Lord High Mayor paused to enjoy the delightful aroma of the flower.

"Ah, magnolia! That means we shall have a south wind soon. You visitors are indeed fortunate to have arrived in Hightown at this time."

Chapter Eight

"I'm not so sure we would be fortunate to arrive here any time," grumbled Twiffle.

"You see," the Mayor went on, disregarding Twiffle's remark. "When the magnolia blossoms that means a south wind is coming. And *that* means we shall soon have a delightful southern cloud on which to walk. I assure you there is nothing more delightful than walking on a southern cloud."

"Seems to me clouds of any sort would be sort of squiggy for walking purposes, no matter how pretty they are to look at," said the Shaggy Man.

"What happens when there's a north wind coming?" asked Twink curiously.

"Oh, then the plant blossoms with a beautiful wild thyme and we are privileged to enjoy that delightful scent. When there's an east wind on its way," the Lord High Mayor continued, "then the plant bears chrysanthemums. When the west wind is coming, we enjoy the blossoms and scent of wild roses."

"Doesn't the west wind bring rain clouds?" asked Tom, remembering that it usually did in Buffalo.

"Yes," said the Mayor, "that is right."

"Then it *rains* here in Hightown where you have a

perfect climate?" asked the boy, remembering his disgust with the rain at home.

"Not at all," replied the Mayor. "There is no gravity to pull the raindrops earthward, so it can't rain. We just go out wading in the rain cloud."

"That's quite a plant," said the Shaggy Man, staring at the flower pot with its beautiful blossoms.

"It's much more than that," said the Mayor. "Certainly since we have the most perfect weather in the world in Hightown, we would have the most perfect weather forecaster. That's just what the plant is."

While Tom was trying to puzzle out why, if Hightown always had perfect weather, it needed any weather forecaster at all, the door of the Mayor's home opened and they were welcomed by a tall, thin woman in a blue checked bungalow apron. She proved to be the Mayor's wife.

The good woman immediately served dinner, hurrying about and doing her best to make the visitors at home. She was particularly pleasant to Twink and Tom and was greatly amazed and a little awed by Twiffle.

Strangely enough, the food consisted entirely of fruits, but they were all fresh and tasty.

Chapter Eight

When the meal was over, the Lord High Mayor announced that it was time for a nap.

"A nap!" exclaimed the Shaggy Man. "Why, it is only a little past noon. We can't sleep now."

"It is the custom in Hightown," remarked the Mayor placidly, "and you will soon come to enjoy the siesta as much as we. However, if you cannot sleep, you may sit on the front porch. But don't go off the porch and wander about, as you may come to the edge of the town and fall to the earth."

With this, the Lord High Mayor and his wife retired to their room and the visitors were left to themselves. There seemed nothing else to do but to follow the Mayor's suggestion and while away the Town's hour of sleep on the front porch. Here they found several chairs and a swing and soon made themselves comfortable.

There was nothing interesting about the scenery, and little to talk about, and they were beginning to be a bit bored when a saucy brown wren flitted out of the sky and perched on the porch railing, regarding Shaggy and his friends with bright little eyes.

"Strangers here, aren't you?" asked the bird. "Fine place to live. You'll like it, I'm sure."

"We don't like it and we don't intend to stay," said the Shaggy Man, a bit ill-humoredly.

"Well, if you don't like it, then why don't you leave right away?" asked the bird.

"How?" asked Shaggy. "Walk to the edge of the town and fall to the earth? We can't fly like you, you know."

"You don't need to fly. You can walk down through the air—or rather, swim down—using your arms to push you through the air. There's no gravity, you know." And with a flirt of its saucy tail the bird was gone.

With a shout, Twiffle leaped to his feet. "What fools we've been! Of course there's no gravity, and we can push ourselves right down to earth! Come on, let's be on our way."

Twiffle ran to the edge of the porch and leaped off head first. They could see the little clown below them, moving his arms like a swimmer.

"Should we try it?" asked the Shaggy Man doubtfully.

Tom didn't wait for an answer. He jumped from the porch just as Twiffle had done. He found that by moving his arms he could force himself downward. Indeed, it was no more effort than walking on a level on the air. In a short time he discovered that, since there was no

gravity, he could move at will, up or down through the air. Now Twink was at his side, thoroughly enjoying the novel experience. The Shaggy Man was following close behind. Twink glanced upward once and saw the spectacle of a whole town, suspended in the air above her. She could even make out the Mayor's house and the flower pot in front of it.

They were all swimming earthward at about the same level, when there was a flirt of small wings and the wren who had spoken to them on the porch of the Lord High Mayor's house, alighted on the Shaggy's Man's shoulder.

"I see you took my advice," said the wren.

"Yes," said the Shaggy Man, "and we are grateful to you for telling us about this easy way to leave Hightown."

"Think nothing of it," replied the wren airily. "I always feel sorry for anyone who gets stuck in Hightown. There isn't a stupider place in the world. Those Hightowners have never seen anything but their own silly little town, so they just can't imagine there's anything else in the world."

"You get around quite a bit, I suppose," ventured the Shaggy Man.

MAYOR

"Being a bird, naturally," retorted the wren with a saucy flirt of his tail.

"Well, then," said Shaggy, "would you mind doing your own flying and getting off my shoulder?"

"That's gratitude for you," said the wren reproachfully. "I save you from a life of boredom and you refuse to let me hitchhike down to earth." But the bird didn't move from Shaggy's shoulder.

"Where are you going—anywhere in particular?" asked Twink.

"Oh yes, of course," the wren replied. "Just below

Hightown there is a lovely orchard of all kinds of fruit trees. That's where the Hightowners get all their food. They live on fruit. They can boast about their silly town all they like, but when they want food you can bet they hurry down to the orchard on earth for it. That's why they don't like us birds. We enjoy eating the fruit in the orchard, too. We seldom go near Hightown, except when the people are asleep. They are so disagreeable they throw things at us and accuse us of stealing from their orchard. Their orchard, indeed!"

"Tell me," said the Shaggy Man, "was your mother a magpie?"

"Of course not," replied the wren indignantly.

"I thought she must have been," said the Shaggy Man, "because you certainly chatter like a magpie."

"That's enough," declared the wren. "If you can't appreciate intelligent conversation, I shan't waste it upon you. You are far too slow for me anyway. No hard feelings, though—good luck to all of you."

And with that the wren was off, darting swiftly earthward.

Shaggy and his friends all had a good laugh over the gossipy little bird.

Ten minutes more "swimming" brought them within sight of the orchard about which the bird had told them.

"The Hightown sign said 'altitude 15,000 feet,'" said Tom. "That's almost three miles. I can't believe we've been swimming that far."

"Probably they boosted that figure as high as their opinion of Hightown," said Twiffle, "and anyway, it did say the altitude varied. Varies very much, I'd say."

A few minutes later they were standing on the earth in a grove of apple, plum, and cherry trees. Every branch was filled with ripe, luscious fruit. Twink looked for their friend, the wren but saw nothing of him. The Shaggy Man began looking about the ground for apples. Suddenly he laughed.

"That was really stupid of me," he called to Twink and Tom. "Of course there aren't any apples on the ground. They can't fall off the trees!"

"This must be where the Hightowners get their fruit," said Twink.

"Of course," replied Shaggy. "They thought they would keep us with them by not telling us how easy it is to reach the earth from Hightown."

"But they must have known we would see some of

them coming and going to the orchard, and find out sooner or later how to escape," said Tom.

"Well, thanks to that bird, we found out sooner," said Twiffle.

Before they left the grove, Shaggy walked in the air

to the upper branches of the biggest apple tree in the orchard and filled his pockets with the largest and ruddiest of the fruit. "Can't tell where we'll find our next meal," he explained.

Knowing the area that was freed from the force of gravity was of very small extent, Shaggy and his friends

walked steadily in one direction, treading several feet in the air, since that was easier than walking on the earth. As there was no difference in the appearance of the countryside, where gravity exerted itself again, they had no way of telling when they would suddenly emerge from the gravity-less land.

Shaggy was in the lead when he suddenly experienced that curious sensation that comes when you step unexpectedly into a hole. The result was that Shaggy toppled forward and found himself sprawled on the grass. Following him came Twink, Tom and Twiffle. Only Tom managed to maintain his balance. What he had realized in time, was simply that the others had stepped off the air, on which they had been walking, to the earth a foot or two below them.

The Shaggy Man sighed. "Give me the earth to crawl around on any day, as our friend the Lord High Mayor would put it, even though it does mean an occasional tumble."

CHAPTER 9

The Valley of Romance

BEFORE the travelers lay one of the most beautiful valleys they had ever seen. Gently sloping hills led down to green fields. Through the middle of the valley flowed a stream that looked like a shimmering blue ribbon stretched out on a green carpet. On the near bank of the stream, in the very center of the valley, stood a castle. Its spires, turrets, and towers were so delicately formed that they glistened like lace-filigree in the sunlight.

Twink's eyes glowed. "Isn't it just the most beautiful sight you ever saw!" she exclaimed.

"It certainly is elegant," admitted the Shaggy Man. "But what we want to know is, what kind of folks live in it."

"Oh, I'm sure they must be very happy and contented," said Twink. "They just *must* be to live in a place like that."

"Then we are going to visit the castle?" asked Twiffle a bit doubtfully.

"It seems the only thing to do," replied the Shaggy Man. "I admit I have no idea where we are, and there is just the possibility that whoever lives in that castle may be able to help us get to Oz, or at least give us directions to the Deadly Desert."

Tom was already on his way, running happily down the green slope toward the stream and the castle.

A ten-minute walk in the bright sunlight brought the little group of adventurers to the doors of the castle. So far they had seen no living persons. Birds sang in the trees, and once a white rabbit had bounded across Tom's path, but there were no signs of human beings.

The Shaggy Man stepped forward and knocked boldly

on the heavy door. Instantly it swung silently open. As the adventurers stepped inside, Twink gasped and even the Shaggy Man, accustomed as he was to the splendour of Ozma's Royal Palace, was impressed with the magnificence of his surroundings.

The floor and walls of the castle were of the whitest alabaster, polished so that the creamy depths of the stone mirrored the luxurious furnishings, casting a luster that enhanced the woven richness of the deep-hued draperies in the paneled walls.

Who had built such a castle? Each of the travelers tried to picture in his own mind the kind of people who might live here. Would they be friendly or unfriendly, helpful or dangerous?

Still there was no sign of people. The only sound that broke the stillness of the foyer in which Shaggy and his friends stood was the tinkling of water as it flowed from a small fountain in the center of the room. This fountain was fashioned like an ordinary drinking fountain, the stream of water that rose from it being not more than three or four inches in height. Around the rim of the alabaster fountain was a metal plate with writing inscribed upon it.

Her curiosity aroused, Twink advanced to the fountain and read:

This is a Phontain.
Any visitors are
requested to speak
their messages into it.
Signed: Rex Ticket & Regina Curtain.

"What in the world can it mean?" whispered Twink. Her companions had gathered about her and were reading the metal plate with wonder.

"Rex and Regina," ventured the Shaggy Man, "are King and Queen—that's Latin. So evidently the head-folks of this castle are King Ticket and Queen Curtain. Hmmmm—certainly odd names for a King and Queen."

"A Phontain—and we're supposed to talk into it!" sniffed Twiffle with disgust. "Whoever heard of such nonsense!"

"Well," observed the Shaggy Man, "I've heard of babbling brooks, so why not a talking fountain that will carry our words?"

"A phoney fountain, I suppose," said Tom, grinning.

Shaggy stooped over the Phontain and spoke clearly and distinctly:

"This is the Shaggy Man of Oz speaking. In behalf of my friends, Twink and Tom of the United States of America, Twiffle, late of the Isle of Conjo, and myself, I request an audience with King Ticket and Queen Curtain."

Almost immediately a red neon sign lighted up over two large double doors at the opposite end of the foyer. The sign flashed the single word "ENTRANCE."

"I guess this is where we go in," remarked the Shaggy Man as he walked to the door and pushed the large metal handle.

They were in a small, brightly lighted theater containing about one hundred seats. On the stage, seated on two thrones, were a man and a woman—evidently King Ticket and Queen Curtain.

All about the King and Queen on the stage there was a bustle of the most frenzied activity. There sounded the clash and clatter of hammers, the ripping of saws and the whirring of drills and bits. Perhaps fifteen or twenty men were hard at work knocking together and erecting a bewildering array of scenery. Calmly seated

about the stage on three-cornered stools, their sewing baskets at their sides, were a number of ladies sewing on costumes. Others were apparently sewing together large pieces of canvas. Still other ladies were engaged in painting artistic pictures on the canvas which was then stretched on wooden frameworks to serve as backdrops for the stage.

After Shaggy and his friends had watched this display of industry for several minutes, they advanced down the middle aisle of the theater.

The King and Queen had been doing no actual work. They merely issued directions to the others who seemed not to pay them the slightest heed, but continued with their tasks.

King Ticket looked up. "Well," he said to the Shaggy Man, "you certainly took your time getting here. It was at least three minutes ago that you announced yourselves on the Phontain."

"Do you mean you really heard us through that water fountain?" asked the Shaggy Man.

"Water hath a limpid tongue with which to lave the naked ear," said King Ticket in a voice which was meant to be impressive. "Of course we heard you through the

Phontain. There are Phontains in all the rooms of the Castle—even in the theater, here—which repeat messages when we speak into them."

Twink thought this was much nicer than telephones which rudely jangling bells, although probably not as private.

"You didn't think," commented Queen Curtain, as though she had read Twink's thoughts, "that we would use ordinary means of communication, such as telephones, in the Valley of Romance, did you?"

"Oh," said the Shaggy Man, "is this the Valley of Romance?"

"It is, and since you are from the Land of Oz," said King Ticket, "you must surely have heard of the Valley of Romance."

The Shaggy Man reflected. It seemed he could recall Ozma mentioning something about some such valley, but he couldn't remember anything that she had said about it.

"How far are we from the Land of Oz?" asked Twiffle.

"Dear me!" exclaimed King Ticket staring at Twiffle. "For a moment I thought you were real!"

"I am real," stated Twiffle with dignity. "I just don't

happen to be made of flesh and blood and bones, that's all."

"And as for the Land of Oz," remarked Queen Curtain meditatively, "it is indeed very far away—over the

stream and over the hill—far, far away to the desert, and then over that, too. In fact, it isn't even in the Valley of Romance, so that means it must be quite some distance off. Too far even to think of," she added as though to say that closed the subject.

The Shaggy Man shrugged. Evidently these two weren't going to be of much help to the travelers in finding their

way back to Oz. Well, they would make a lunch of the apples he carried in his pockets and then continue on their journey.

Shaggy and his friends made themselves comfortable in the deeply upholstered seats in the front row of the theater. Shaggy divided the apples between Twink, Tom, and himself. He offered several to King Ticket and Queen Curtain, who refused them rather disdainfully.

Shaggy and his friends ate in silence while they watched the activity on the stage. Not one of the busily working men and women seemed even to be aware of the presence of the strangers.

Finishing his apples, the Shaggy Man arose and said, "Looks like you folks are getting ready for quite a play. What's the name of it?"

Unexpectedly one of the workers on a ladder stopped his task of hammering together a bit of framework for the scenery and replied to Shaggy's question: "That we won't know until the curtain goes up tonight. Tonight's the First Night of this new play, and I shall be in charge." The fellow added impressively, "For I am the First Knight of the Realm, you know."

"No," replied the Shaggy Man, "I didn't know."

Shaggy was a little angry for he thought the man was making fun of him.

"Oh, yes," Queen Curtain went on placidly. "He is the First Knight of the Realm—in fact all these people are Lords and Ladies of the Royal Theater."

"And do you always build your own scenery and make your own costumes?" asked the Shaggy Man.

King Ticket shifted uneasily on his throne. "Yes, and it always seems to turn out rather badly. I suppose all we were really meant to do was to enjoy the magnificent performances on the stage. And," the King brightened,

"that is all we truly have any desire to do. That is a full life for us and quite enough—to sit in the theater and watch great drama unfold. What need have we for any lives of our own, when the stage is a world in itself and therein we are content to dwell." The King's voice gently subsided to a whisper, and his eyes stared dreamily into space.

Queen Curtain took up the story. "During the performances Lord Props and Lady Cue help the actors, although none too well, I must admit. Lord Props seldom gets things right: when a gun shot is called for there is very likely to be a bell ringing. Once when the scene required a bowl of goldfish, Lord Props actually managed to cram a whole live lobster into a soup tureen. Lady Cue does, however, manage to do a bit better with her cues. She is seldom more than two lines behind the actors."

"How long do your plays run?" asked Shaggy.

"Night after night after glorious night for years and years and years—sometimes as long as we can remember there has been the same wonderful play for us to see on the stage at night," said the King who had awakened from his dream.

"And what do you do the rest of the time?" queried the Shaggy Man.

"Nothing—nothing but sleep," answered King Ticket. "Why should we? We have the glorious stage for our lives." The King looked about him at the work going on.

"Who are your actors?" asked Tom.

For a moment King Ticket seemed embarrassed. Then he replied vaguely with a wave of his hand as if to dismiss the matter as of little importance: "Oh, just actors —you know, the usual thing, leading man, leading lady, villain, comedian, and so forth."

"Come," said the Shaggy Man, "we're wasting time here. We should be on our way if we ever hope to reach the Land of Oz."

Queen Curtain looked up. "You won't stay for dinner and the theater?"

"No, thank you," replied Shaggy. "We have a long journey ahead of us and we really must be going on our way now."

With this, Shaggy and his friends walked up the aisle toward the door by which they had entered the theater. King Ticket had been staring intently at the Shaggy Man and now he whispered something in a low voice to Queen

Curtain. The Queen considered for a moment and then nodded her head.

Twink and Tom, who were directly behind the Shaggy Man, stopped and stared at each other. They were only half way up the aisle. The Shaggy Man had been only a step ahead of them.

Now he was gone—vanished completely!

CHAPTER 10

Lady Cue

TWINK and Tom were utterly bewildered at their friend's disappearance. They didn't know what to do next.

Twiffle turned to King Ticket and Queen Curtain on the stage and demanded: "Where is the Shaggy Man?"

King Ticket looked up innocently. "Why, has he gone somewhere?"

"Certainly he has gone somewhere," said Twiffle, who

was becoming angry. "And you had better tell us where. Don't forget that the Shaggy Man is an important personage of the Land of Oz. If anything happens to him you will be sorry."

"Pooh!" sniffed King Ticket. "We know all about the Land of Oz and its silly girl ruler, Ozma. But your famous Shaggy Man had not even heard of the Valley of Romance. What can anyone in Oz do? They don't even know of our existence."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that," declared Twiffle with more courage than he felt.

"Anyway," continued King Ticket musingly, "the Land of Oz is vastly over-rated. Why, as far as I know, there isn't a single theater in all the country!"

"And so," began Queen Curtain quietly, "why don't you children just make yourselves comfortable until dinner time? Then you may join us for the meal and afterwards you shall be our guests in the Royal Box to witness the performance of our new play."

Twiffle was aroused now. He climbed right up on the arm of King Ticket's chair. "We don't want your dinner. We don't want to see your play. All we want is the Shaggy Man and then we shall continue our journey."

"Tut, tut," admonished King Ticket. "What a violent disposition the little puppet has."

"I am afraid," said Queen Curtain, "that you really have no choice. You must stay here until we are ready

for you to depart. After all, you came of your own accord, you know."

Twiffle was silent. He was at a loss to know what to say or do. Twink and Tom felt suddenly alone and a little bit frightened, now that the Shaggy Man was gone. Even in the brief time they had known him, they had grown very fond of him, and had come to rely upon him.

Seeing this, Twiffle returned to stand by the children and said: "Never you mind. We'll find the Shaggy Man all right. Perhaps it would be wise to remain here tonight as these people wish us to do. That will give us a chance to find out what they have done with Shaggy."

This was said in a whisper, to which Tom answered: "Well, I could enjoy a good meal. We haven't had anything to eat but fruit since yesterday." Actually Tom was as worried about Shaggy as Twink, but, being a boy, he didn't want to let the girl know.

Twink was indignant. "I'm surprised at you, Tom! The idea of talking about food when we've just lost our best friend! But I suppose Twiffle is right."

"Good!" said King Ticket. "Then that is settled and you will be with us for dinner and the theater!"

"Gosh!" exclaimed Tom, "do you suppose he heard everything we said?"

"I don't have any doubt of it," replied Twiffle calmly. "Therefore we might as well converse in our ordinary voices."

"You were indeed fortunate to have arrived just in time for the opening night of our new play," said Queen Curtain pleasantly. "I am sure you will enjoy it im-

mensely. Tell me, have you children seen many plays?"

"Oh, yes," replied Tom, "we have seen lots of our school plays, and last Christmas Twink and I had important parts in the Christmas pageant."

"Well, then, you will certainly enjoy yourselves tonight," said the Queen, smiling happily at the children. "We will work only about an hour more. Then everything will be in readiness. That will give us plenty of time to tidy up, dress in our finest, and enjoy the dinner and the play to the utmost."

The hour passed swiftly. The children apparently were engrossed in the work going on, on the stage, but actually their thoughts were busy puzzling over the mystery of what had happened to the Shaggy Man.

"Lady Cue will show you to your rooms, children," announced Queen Curtain, rising from her throne. The Lords and Ladies were putting away their tools and sewing. A tall, thin, worried-looking woman, sewing basket on her arm, stepped down a short flight of stairs from the stage and smiled rather absent-mindedly at Twink and Tom.

"You will come with me, I think?" she said hesitantly.

Twink and Tom looked at Twiffle, who nodded, and all

three followed the tall lady who was proceeding uncertainly up the aisle.

Outside the theater, Lady Cue led Twiffle and the children up a broad staircase leading to the second floor of the castle. Here there was a long corridor, with smaller corridors leading off of it, each with many doors opening into various suites and rooms. Lady Cue had advanced only a short distance down the main corridor when she stopped uncertainly before a door and turned to her charges.

"This is a door," she said, "but do you think it is the right one?"

"I'm sure we wouldn't know, Madame," replied Twiffle. "After all, you live in this castle and should know all about it."

Lady Cue sighed. "Of course, of course. I forgot for the moment that you are the strangers. Well, we shall have to do our best to find the right door."

"Haven't you been in any of these rooms?" asked Tom curiously.

"*In* them?" asked Lady Cue vaguely. "Oh, I must have since I live here, you know. Once inside the rooms I am sure I would be able to find my way with no trouble.

But outside them it is most confusing. How is one to know what is *inside* when one is *outside*?"

Lady Cue looked at them beseechingly and wandered down the corridor to another door exactly like the one

she had just left. She stared at this one for several minutes, then boldly opened it a crack and peered in.

"Oh, Goodness! I beg your pardon," she said to someone in the room, hastily closing the door. "Well," she said, "that's one that isn't the one. The First Knight of the Realm is in there pressing his breeches for tonight's performance."

"The First Knight of the Realm presses his own clothes?" asked Twink.

"He does, he does," asserted Lady Cue wagging her head. "I did it for him once, but somehow the creases ran zig-zag and he looked like he was corrugated. It is my opinion, though," Lady Cue added in a confidential whisper, "that he wears a poor quality garment."

Lady Cue turned and started off down one of the smaller corridors. Twink, Tom, and Twiffle followed her, at which Lady Cue stopped and looked at them with a puzzled expression. "Did you wish to see me?" she asked.

"You were taking us to our rooms," reminded Twiffle.

"I was?" exclaimed Lady Cue greatly surprised. "Well, then you just show me where your rooms are and I will be glad to take you to them."

"But you were supposed to show *us* to our rooms," said Tom.

"I was? Oh, dear, this is confusing," said Lady Cue.

"Have you no idea where our rooms are, Madame?" asked Twiffle.

"I wouldn't say that," replied Lady Cue. "I did have a very good idea, but it seems I mislaid it somewhere.

There are so very many rooms you know—and any one of them might be yours, if only there weren't so many other people in the castle. That's what we must be careful about, you know. You will want your very own rooms, won't you? I don't think you would want to share rooms with someone else, would you, maybe?"

All the time they were wandering from corridor to corridor while Lady Cue became more and more unsure of her bearings.

At last she stopped and said hopelessly, "You'll have to pardon me, my friends, but I am afraid I am lost. I haven't the faintest idea where we are."

"What shall we do?" asked Twink.

"I have it," said Lady Cue. "I will pin my handkerchief to this door," and she indicated a door opposite them, "so that we can't get more lost. Whenever we pass this door with the handkerchief on it, we will know exactly where we are."

"And where will that be?" asked Twiffle.

"Why, where the handkerchief is, of course," replied Lady Cue. With that Lady Cue reached in her pocket and pulled out a large linen napkin that bore traces of food on it.

"Oh, dear," she exclaimed. "I seem to have picked this up at luncheon. How thoughtless of me." She advanced to the door, and removing a large safety pin from the front of her dress, carefully pinned the napkin to the door.

"Whose rooms are these?" asked Twiffle.

"I haven't the faintest idea," replied Lady Cue.

"Why not open the door and find out?" pursued Twiffle.

"Why not?" echoed Lady Cue as she turned the knob and pushed open the door. They all stepped inside. There was no sign of any occupants of the room. The closets were all empty and there were no personal articles about. The suite consisted of a large, beautifully furnished living room, with doors leading to two comfortable bedrooms with baths.

"Why can't we use these rooms?" asked Twiffle.

"What a wonderful idea," exclaimed Lady Cue. "Then we won't have to hunt any longer for your rooms, because these will be your rooms. But are you sure it's all right? It sounds much too simple." And with a worried look the poor lady started to take down the napkin from the door.

"No, no," said Twiffle. "Leave the napkin there. Then you will be able to find us again. Remember now—just look for the napkin on the door and you'll know which is our room."

Lady Cue nodded and extracted a large, old-fashioned watch from the depths of her sewing basket. She squinted at it, and said, "You have just one-half hour to prepare for dinner. I will call for you and take you to the—the —oh yes, the dining room. That," she confided, "is where they are serving dinner tonight." With that the befuddled Lady Cue closed the door, only to find she was still in the room. So, she opened it, stepped outside, and then carefully closed it again.

Twink, Tom, and Twiffle, in spite of their troubles, burst out laughing. If anything went right with the play tonight they were sure it wouldn't be due to Lady Cue's efforts.

While Twiffle waited patiently, the children bathed, scrubbed their faces and hands, and reappeared much refreshed and quite ready for the dinner that had been promised them.

Twink was fascinated with the long rows of books on one side of the luxuriously furnished room, but she

hardly had time to do more than glance at a few pictures, when there came a gentle rapping on their door.

Twiffle opened it. There stood Lady Cue. Her dress was on backwards and she had forgotten to do her hair.

Solemnly she counted Twink, Tom, and Twiffle—one, two, three. "Is that right?" she asked them anxiously. "Were there just three of you? So often when I count I have something left over. This time it seems to come out even. That's very odd."

"Three would be odd," muttered Twiffle. Fortunately Lady Cue didn't hear him, or she might have become

even more confused. She was already on her way through the corridors, so the children and the clown followed her. After several false starts, and wandering through a number of corridors, they finally found their way to the great staircase.

CHAPTER 11

What Happened to Shaggy

THE Grand Dining Room of the castle was brilliantly lighted by three huge crystal chandeliers. Each of the chandeliers flamed with more than a score of tapering lights which were reflected shimmeringly in the alabaster ceiling and walls.

As soon as Twink, Tom, and Twiffle entered the dining room, they were espied by Queen Curtain who motioned them to seat themselves at her right. Queen

Curtain and King Ticket occupied the head of the table. The Lords and Ladies of the Castle were filing into the dining room, chattering spiritedly, and all handsomely gowned and garbed. In a few minutes all were seated. There were a few curious glances at the three strangers at the table, but for the most part the Lords and Ladies of the Valley of Romance were far too excited over the play they were to witness that evening to give more than a passing glance to the children and the little clown.

The meal passed, through many delicious and elaborate courses, with no incidents. Queen Curtain played the charming host, occasionally tossing pleasant remarks to the children and Twiffle. Poor Lady Cue put salt in her tea instead of sugar, but she drank the entire cup without seeming to notice her mistake.

"Perhaps she really likes it that way," Twink whispered to Tom.

At the end of the meal, King Ticket rose and addressed the assemblage solemnly: "The moment has come for which we have prepared these many days. We will now pass into the theater for the first performance of the new play."

No one spoke. This, apparently was an important

moment. The only sound in the vast dining room was the rustling of the ladies' skirts and the patter of footsteps on the alabaster floor.

Queen Curtain took Twink by the hand, and Tom and

Twiffle followed into the theater. It was brilliantly lighted as the Lords and Ladies settled into their seats. A few of them hurried backstage—they were the ones who worked the scenery and otherwise aided in the presentation of the play. Twink, Tom, and Twiffle found themselves seated in the Royal Box with King Ticket and Queen Curtain.

The houselights dimmed, the curtains went up, and with no preliminaries the play was under way.

Two actors walked woodenly forward on the stage. They were dressed in what Twink and Tom could tell was supposed to be armor, but was obviously kitchen utensils strung together and about to fall off. From the words they were saying, the two knights seemed to be getting very angry at each other. But they looked at the audience, instead of looking at each other, and spoke their lines in a dazed, unexcited way as though they were talking in their sleep. Impossible as it seemed from their lack of action, it became apparent that they were so enraged they had decided to fight out in a tournament, their quarrel over a lady. Oh, yes, there she was at the side of the stage, paying no attention at all to the knights.

The tournament scene came next. The knights in their pots and pans were mounted on extraordinary horses. Each was made up of two men covered with tufted candlewick bedspreads. They too moved about the stage in a slow and sleepy way. The lady who had inspired the fight looked on from her box seat at the side of the stage, waving her handkerchief. But it had slipped her mind apparently that it was the tournament she was

watching, and she looked straight at the audience and listlessly waved her handkerchief as if trying to attract the attention of anyone who might care to wave back at her.

When the knights supposedly rushed their horses at each other and aimed their spears, the steeds ambled slowly in opposite directions, so far apart that they seemed not to be aware of each other at all. When they did finally get together, the horse of the knight who was to be winner slipped and fell down, and the bedspread slid to the floor. The horse and the knight who was to be victorious had to be re-assembled before he could triumph over his victim who had been watching him pick himself up off the floor.

Twink and Tom had to clap their hands over their mouths to keep from bursting out with laughter. They did this because it was apparent that King Ticket, Queen Curtain, and the Lords and Ladies took the play quite seriously. Indeed, they were wildly enthusiastic.

Throughout the entire play the scenery kept toppling over, Lord Props provided the wrong sound effects, and stage furniture at every opportunity, and Lady Cue became so interested in a book of poetry that she read

from this instead of giving the actors and actresses their proper lines.

Twink and Tom thought it strange that the people on the stage should mumble their lines so badly and behave altogether as though they were only half awake and were moving by clockwork.

Act after act continued in this fashion. But the audience saw only the drama as it was intended. The Queen and the Ladies wept openly, applying delicate lace handkerchiefs to their eyes. King Ticket and the Lords, being men, contented themselves with brushing away a furtive tear and repeatedly blowing their noses loudly in their spotless white linen kerchiefs.

"Magnificent!" exclaimed King Ticket.

"Glorious!" proclaimed Queen Curtain through her tears. "This play will run for years—it is one of the greatest romances we have ever staged!"

"Romance!" sighed King Ticket. "Ah, sublime romance—there is nothing in the world so touching and beautiful!"

It was near the end of the last act. Twink and Tom were nodding. Suddenly a new actor appeared upon the stage. Twink's half shut eyes flew open. She grasped

Tom by the arms and shook him awake. Twiffle leaned forward, holding on to the rail of the box. None of them said a word. For a few seconds they merely stared, unbelievingly.

The new character who had come on the stage and was even then mumbling his lines in a mechanical voice was the Shaggy Man!

CHAPTER 12

A Midnight Adventure

AT the sight of the Shaggy Man on the stage, Twink couldn't contain herself. She leaned far out of the box and called "Shaggy Man! Here we are—it's Tom, Twiffle, and Twink!"

If the Shaggy Man heard, he gave no indication of it. His eyes stared straight ahead of him, and he mumbled the words of his lines as though he were speaking in a dream in which he was only half awake.

But King Ticket and Queen Curtain, as well as the audience of Lords and Ladies heard. A wave of annoyed "Sshhhhhhs" arose from the audience, while Queen Curtain grabbed Twink by the arm, pulling her back into her seat and saying angrily: "How dare you interrupt the play! For that you shall join your precious Shaggy Man on the stage tomorrow night."

Tom started from his seat indignantly at the Queen's threatening words, but Twiffle, who looked worried, pulled him back. The three unwilling play-goers fell into an uneasy silence.

A few moments later the curtain came down with a crash and the play was over.

"Dear, dear me," remarked King Ticket. "There go the curtain ropes again. We shall have to repair them tomorrow."

Queen Curtain turned to Twiffle and the children. "Go to your rooms immediately," she ordered sternly. "You know where they are. Don't try to escape. That is impossible. All the doors leading out of the castle are securely locked. And as for you," she said, shooting Twink an angry glance, "you will be taken care of tomorrow. Now be gone—all of you!"

Chapter Twelve

Twink shivered. Tom took her hand, and with Twiffle following, they made their way out of the theater to their rooms. They passed unnoticed through the Lords and Ladies who were noisily discussing the play, exclaiming over its excellence, and looking forward to the next night's performance—of the same play.

As soon as they were in their rooms, Twiffle quickly closed the door and silently motioned the children to his side.

The little clown was plainly excited. "Listen," he whispered to the children. "I believe I have figured out what has happened to the Shaggy Man—and all the rest of the actors and actresses, for that matter. They have been enchanted. King Ticket and Queen Curtain have cast some kind of spell upon them so that they are only half awake. The only existence they have is their dream-like life on the stage as they go through their parts in the play."

"I see," nodded Twink. "I believe you're right. Otherwise Shaggy would surely have answered when I called to him from the box."

"Of course," said Twiffle.

"Then you don't think," surmised Tom, "that any

of the actors and actresses are Lords and Ladies of the castle?"

"Not a bit of it," stated Twiffle firmly. "It is my belief that they are people from adjoining countries, who, like ourselves, have wandered unwittingly into the castle, and have been enchanted for the pleasure of King Ticket, Queen Curtain, and the Lords and Ladies who have always lived here."

"You must be right," murmured Twink, recalling how King Ticket had brushed aside their question as to the identity of the actors and actresses.

"Of course, I am right," asserted Twiffle. "It is the only solution that answers all the questions. What we must do now is find a way to rescue the Shaggy Man tonight before King Ticket and Queen Curtain have a chance to cast their disgusting old spell on Twink tomorrow."

"Then, let's get started," said Tom. "What do we do, Twiffle?"

"Nothing now," replied Twiffle. "We must wait until everyone in the castle is asleep. Only then will it be safe for us to act."

Twink and Tom tried to be calm during the next hour,

as they discussed with Twiffle their chances of rescuing the Shaggy Man and making an escape from the castle.

At last Twiffle went quietly to the door and slowly opened it, peering up and down the hall corridor. The

entire castle seemed to be wrapped in deep silence. There was not a sound.

"Come," whispered Twiffle, "I believe it is safe to proceed now. Everyone seems to be asleep. You must walk on your tip-toes, so your steps won't be heard."

"Where are we going, Twiffle?" whispered Tom.

"To the theater, and then backstage—that is where

I am almost sure we will find the Shaggy Man and all the rest of the unfortunate actors and actresses."

The lights of the castle were dimmed to a soft glow, but this was enough for the adventurers to find their way to the theater with no trouble. Here, the same soft light glowed, filling the theater with a thin, ghostly luminescence.

Twiffle quickly led the way down the aisle, then up the small flight of stairs to the stage. Beckoning the children to follow him, Twiffle darted through the wings to the back of the stage. Here an amazing sight greeted them.

Lined up in two rows, like soldiers on a drill field, were about fifty men, women, and children. Some of them Twink and Tom recalled having seen on the stage earlier that evening. They ranged in age from small children to elderly men and women. They stood stiffly, as though they were at attention. Their eyes were tight shut. So still were these figures that Twink couldn't tell whether or not they were breathing. In the front row stood the Shaggy Man.

"Every type for every part," muttered Twiffle to himself. Then, turning to the children, he whispered, "Here

they are, just as I suspected—the unfortunate victims of King Ticket and Queen Curtain. They have no more life than mere dummies, until the curtain goes up and they walk on the stage to play their parts in that absurd drama."

Twiffle approached the Shaggy Man and studied him intently. At last he sighed and shook his head. "I am afraid there is nothing we can do just now," he admitted. "I learned a little magic from Conjo, and I hoped that I might be able to release the Shaggy Man, but the spell that is upon him is a strange one. I have no power to break it."

"There must surely be *something* we can do," said Tom, thinking of Queen Curtain's threatening speech to Twink.

"I must have time to think," said Twiffle. "At least we have discovered the whereabouts of the Shaggy Man and we know what has happened to him and all these other poor people. There must be some way to release them, if only I can hit upon it. I suggest we return to our rooms. We certainly don't want to be discovered here."

"But what about Twink?" asked Tom with dismay.

Chapter Twelve

"I am hoping I can prevent Queen Curtain from making good her threat," replied Twiffle grimly.

"Oh, don't worry about me," said Twink bravely. "If worst comes to worst and I don't make a better actress than the rest of these folks, I'll be awfully disappointed in myself."

CHAPTER 13

Tom Goes to the Rescue

DESPITE the late hour at which they had gone to bed, Tom awakened bright and early in the morning, hurried into his clothes and bounded into Twink's room.

The bed was empty!

Thinking that Twink might have risen before him, Tom dashed into the living room. There he found Twiffle alone, deep in thought.

Chapter Thirteen

"Twiffle! Twiffle! Twink is gone!" exclaimed Tom.

Twiffle nodded his head gravely. "I know," he said. "I looked for her about half an hour ago and she was gone. I was afraid this would happen."

"But this is terrible!" protested Tom. "Think of poor Twink—one of those senseless dummies, just for the amusement of these wicked people." The boy was thoroughly incensed as he went on. "They call this the Valley of Romance! Why, they must be heartless. They don't even know what real romance or love is!"

Twiffle let out a shout and leaped to his feet.

"My boy, you've done it!" he cried.

"Done what?" gasped the astonished Tom.

"You've just given me the solution of all our problems. I now know how we can save not only Twink and the Shaggy Man, but all the other people enslaved by King Ticket and Queen Curtain!"

"You do?" said Tom wonderingly.

"Yes," responded Twiffle. "You were wrong about only one thing—King Ticket, Queen Curtain, and the Lords and Ladies are not heartless. They have hearts, all right. But you were very right when you said they don't know what real romance or love is. They don't.

We're going to show them, and in the process we will rescue Twink and Shaggy!"

Twiffle excitedly unfolded his plan. As Tom listened he grew more and more cheerful. When Twiffle finished,

Tom picked up the little clown and danced exuberantly about the room with him.

"Twiffle," the boy shouted, "you're a wonder!"

Twiffle grinned from ear to ear. "It was you who gave me the idea," he reminded Tom modestly. "But we must plan very carefully," he went on, becoming serious. "Remember, there is only a slim chance that our plan

will work. We must take that chance and hope for the best. As there is nothing we can do until tonight when the play is again presented, we should make use of this time to work out every single detail of our plan."

Twiffle and Tom went over their plan again and again. Nevertheless, the day seemed to Tom one of the longest he had ever spent. The long hours of waiting were broken only three times—when Lady Cue brought in Tom's meals.

The food was quite good, but a bit mixed up. For breakfast the befuddled Lady brought Tom a large slice of roast beef with corn flakes and apple pie. Lunch consisted of fried eggs, mashed potatoes, and doughnuts; while dinner was made up of broiled apricots, strawberry shortcake, and graham crackers. But Tom was hungry and didn't mind the strange assortment of foods too much. He managed to eat everything even though Lady Cue brought him six spoons with each meal and no knives or forks.

When Lady Cue appeared with the evening meal, Tom was a bit worried because they had not been asked to dine with the Lords and Ladies in the Royal Dining Room. Could this mean they would not be invited to

the play? If so, then their plan of rescue would be ruined.

Twiffle was not worried. He was sure they would be asked to share the King and Queen's Royal Box, if only as a form of punishment, since they would be compelled to see Twink as one of the puppets on the stage.

Twiffle proved to be right. Early in the evening Lady Cue appeared in the doorway and led them again to the theater.

King Ticket and Queen Curtain were already settled in the Royal Box when Tom and Twiffle arrived. Except to give them an icy stare, the monarchs paid no attention to their guests. Twiffle winked at Tom, but both of them were quaking lest Twiffle's plan might not work. If it did not work, they would be worse off than ever.

If possible the play—it was the same one—was even worse than on the previous night. The players went through their parts in a dream-like fashion, chanting their lines woodenly. Scenery fell apart, the curtain came down at the wrong moments and everything possible went wrong. But King Ticket and Queen Curtain were enchanted. Along with the Lords and Ladies they applauded vociferously and reacted to the ridiculous performance

with even more enthusiasm than they had displayed the night before.

This night, Tom had no trouble in keeping awake. He squirmed about in his seat with impatience, waiting until Twink and the Shaggy Man would appear. This didn't happen until the play was well into the fourth and last act.

As on the night before, the Shaggy Man wandered blindly onto the stage, speaking the same lines in an almost indistinguishable voice.

A moment later Tom tensed with excitement. A new character had been added. It was Twink. Her eyes stared as she moved mechanically across the stage, murmuring the words of her lines. Tom took a deep breath and glanced at Twiffle. The time had come to act. Twiffle nodded.

In the next instant Tom climbed to the wide rail that encircled the Royal Box. Poised there for a moment, he gave a leap and landed on the stage. Without hesitating a moment he dashed to the Shaggy Man, and to the amazement of everyone in the audience except Twiffle, went through the Shaggy Man's pockets. Tom gave an exultant cry. He had found what he wanted. He held

the Love Magnet before him, waving it first at the Shaggy Man and then at Twink.

Shaggy and Twink started, then rubbed their eyes and stared about them unbelievingly. Meanwhile Tom was busy. He didn't hesitate until he had exposed the Love Magnet to the gaze of each of the enchanted actors and actresses. As each one looked at the Love Magnet he lost his glassy stare and came to life. In a few seconds the stage was filled—not with dummies—but with human beings, bewildered, but freed from the thralldom of King Ticket and Queen Curtain's evil spell. As they recovered, several of them threw their arms around Tom, while all gazed at the boy with fondness and love in their eyes. Twink suddenly realized how greatly she loved her brother, and the first thing the Shaggy Man said was, "A great boy, that Tom!"

Meanwhile King Ticket and Queen Curtain, as well as the entire audience of Lords and Ladies had risen to their feet. None of them spoke. The real drama suddenly being lived on the stage held them fascinated.

At this very moment, Tom advanced to the front center of the stage and with all eyes upon him, flashed the Love Magnet before the audience.

Chapter Thirteen

A vast sigh went through the theater. And then there was a confused babel as the Lords and Ladies crowded into the aisle, each of them bent upon reaching the stage and embracing Tom, who, they realized suddenly, was quite the most lovable person they had ever beheld.

King Ticket leaped from the Royal Box onto the stage, hurrying toward Tom. "My dear boy," he exclaimed, "how could I have been so blind? Isn't there something I can do for you? Name it, and you shall have it! My Kingdom is yours for the asking!"

Queen Curtain was standing in the box, arms out-

stretched appealingly to Tom. "You darling boy!" she cried, "How wonderful it is that you have come to visit us!"

Twiffle was sitting quietly in the Royal Box, grinning broadly. "Wouldn't old Conjo be surprised," he thought, "if he knew how well the Love Magnet has done its work?—Tom really is quite a boy!"

CHAPTER 14

The Valley of Love

THAT night there was a great feast in the Grand Dining Room of the castle. Tom was the guest of honor, sitting at the head of the table between King Ticket and Queen Curtain. Twink, feeling very proud of her brother, sat at the Queen's right with the Shaggy Man and Twiffle at her side. In addition to the Lords and Ladies of the castle, all the people who had formerly been actors and actresses were seated about the table.

There were speeches, merrymaking and much laughter while everyone enjoyed course after course of the delicious food served.

King Ticket and Queen Curtain talked together during the feast, seeming to discuss something on which they finally appeared to reach a decision.

King Ticket arose and, banging with a silver fork against a drinking goblet, obtained the attention and silence of the merrymakers.

"My dear friends," began the King, beaming on his audience, "good Queen Curtain and I have been discussing a proposal which we are sure will meet with your approval. You are well aware that although we did not know it, we, the people of the Valley of Romance, have been living in a bondage that was even greater than that which we cast over the poor unfortunates who wandered into the castle. For we lived without knowing the meaning of true romance and love. We found our only pleasure in artificial romance as we saw it on the stage. We had no love for each other—no romance among ourselves.

"Now all that is changed. Not only do we now appreciate and know the true meaning of real love—but

the people whom we enslaved are freed and happy once more.

"We have one person to thank for this—Tom, who, with the Love Magnet, brought us our present joy and happiness. Queen Curtain and I propose that we yield

our thrones and that Tom become the new King of the Valley of Romance."

The applause was tremendous. Apparently everyone in the Grand Dining Room favored King Ticket's startling plan.

But Tom leaped to his feet and exclaimed:

Chapter Fourteen

"Your Highnesses, Ladies and Gentlemen—Thank you for this great honor, but I cannot be your King. Maybe I'll never get the chance to be a king again. But the important thing for Twink and me is to find our way home. The Shaggy Man has promised that Ozma of Oz will send us home if we can only reach Oz. That is the thing we want most. Anyway, I have no right to be your King—I don't know anything about the job, and you should really be grateful to the Love Magnet for making you happy—not me. Now that you folks know the meaning of real love, I'm sure King Ticket will make you a fine King and Queen Curtain will be a real Queen."

Again the applause resounded. At last King Ticket rose again, expressing his regret that Tom could not remain with them to be their King. King Ticket promised that he would do his best to be a kind and loving monarch. His first move, he said, would be to grant complete freedom to the people who had wandered to the castle and had become slaves on the Stage of False Romance. These people, he said, might return to their own homes, or they might, if they wished, remain to dwell as Lords and Ladies in the Castle of Romance.

Since they would have no further use for the theater, King Ticket promised to have the seats removed and the theater remodeled into a real Temple of Learning, where each of his subjects might learn some craft or art that would be useful or pleasing to his fellows. Here they would meet each day and study and work at their arts and crafts, enjoying companionship and the satisfaction of real accomplishment and creation.

"If you do manage to get to the Land of Oz," King Ticket said to the Shaggy Man, "I wonder if you would ask Professor Wogglebug if he would like to come to our Temple of Learning as a visiting Professor? I am sure there are many things he could teach us that would be both interesting and useful."

Shaggy promised to extend the invitation to the learned Wogglebug, who was head of the Royal College of Oz.

In spite of all the excitement, Twink and Tom were nodding by the time the feasting and speech-making were ended.

Everyone bade them a happy goodnight and Lady Cue conducted them once more to their rooms. The Love Magnet had wrought its change on Lady Cue, too. Gone was her former befuddled state in which she was not at

all sure of anything or anyone. Now she was a charming, gracious lady with the manners of a cordial and perfect hostess.

Shaggy and the children were fast asleep almost as soon as their heads touched the soft pillows. Twiffle passed the night looking at the pictures in the books on the living room shelves.

By the middle of the following morning they were ready to begin their adventures again. They found that King Ticket, Queen Curtain, the Lords and Ladies, and the former actors and actresses, many of whom had decided to make their homes in the Valley of Romance, were gathered in the courtyard to bid them farewell.

King Ticket gave them general directions for traveling to reach the Deadly Desert. That was the nearest he could come to directing them to the Land of Oz.

Just as they were about to leave, Lady Cue arrived breathlessly on the scene. She was so excited that she nearly lapsed into her old bewildered state.

"I— I— I have been so busy all morning cooking this for you that I was afraid I would miss you." Lady Cue looked anxiously at Shaggy and his friends, as though she couldn't believe they were still there. As she spoke,

she handed Shaggy a large lunch basket filled with deliciously prepared good things to eat.

Shaggy, Twink, Tom, and even Twiffle—who didn't eat—thanked Lady Cue warmly for her thoughtfulness. They were glad she had not changed entirely, for they had grown fond of her. As they turned away from her and started once again on their journey, Lady Cue was staring after them and dabbing at her eyes with a dishcloth.

Waving goodbye, the little band of adventurers followed the stream to the south as it wound through the green and peaceful Valley of Romance.

When they were almost out of sight of the Castle of Romance, Twink looked back and saw the delicately fashioned spires shimmering in the sun.

"Now," the girl said, "it is truly as beautiful a castle as it looks."

CHAPTER 15

The King of the Fairy Beavers

BEYOND the valley, the country became rugged and rolling, with outcroppings of grey rock, while the river narrowed, grew deeper, and flowed much more swiftly.

It was well into the afternoon, when the Shaggy Man suggested that they rest under a gnarled tree near the river bank and enjoy their luncheon.

They were all glad for the rest on the grass which grew

high and coarse over the countryside, and the food which Lady Cue had packed for them was both satisfying and delicious.

Twink took a long look at the rather forbidding scenery about them. In the distance loomed dark mountain peaks, while trees became fewer and fewer.

"Doesn't look like there's a living thing within miles!" said the little girl, a bit disconsolately.

"In a way that's a good sign," replied the Shaggy Man. "For the nearer we come to the Deadly Desert the more wild and desolate the country is. From the looks of things here I wouldn't be surprised if we were near the Kingdom of the Nomes."

"Have you any idea how we can get to Oz, once we arrive at the Deadly Desert?" asked Twiffle.

"No," said the Shaggy Man, "I haven't. But one can never tell what will happen when traveling in a fairy country, and I figure the closer we are to the Deadly Desert, the closer we are to Oz. Now if I just hadn't lost Ozma's Magic Compass—but there's no use crying over spilt milk."

"Did I understand you to say you are going to the Land of Oz?"

The words were spoken in a small, clear voice. At the same time the tall grass just in front of Shaggy and his friends parted, and a beaver stepped out and viewed them fearlessly.

Twink was amazed to see that the beaver wore a small golden crown on his head, while in his right paw he carried a slender beech rod.

"Yes," said the Shaggy Man, calmly regarding the beaver while he continued to munch a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. "That is, we hope to get to the Land of Oz. First we must find some way to cross the Deadly Desert."

The beaver was silent for a moment, then he said: "Will you take me to Oz with you?"

"Take you with us!" exclaimed the Shaggy Man. "Why, we aren't at all sure we can get there ourselves. But why do you want to go to Oz? I can tell by your crown that you're a King of some sort and not an ordinary beaver."

"I am the King of the Fairy Beavers," announced the little animal, a bit proudly. "None of us are ordinary beavers, since we are fairy creatures. And as for why I want to visit Oz—well, I have heard wonderful tales of

that famous fairyland, and I have long dreamed of visiting it."

"Seems to me," observed Tom, "that since you are a Fairy King, your magic powers could take you to Oz."

"No," replied the beaver King, "my magic is mostly water magic and that would be less than useless on the fiery sands of the Deadly Desert. But that isn't the main reason that keeps me from visiting Oz."

"What is it, then?" asked Shaggy.

"I have not been invited," replied the beaver King simply.

"I am sure that if Ozma knew about that, she would fix it," said the Shaggy Man kindly.

"Do you think so?" asked the beaver. "Do you really think Ozma would invite me? I hoped you would say that for it gives me courage to put forth a suggestion I have in mind."

"What is that?" asked Shaggy.

"If you, the famous Shaggy Man of Oz, were to invite me to visit Oz, then everything would be quite proper, wouldn't it?"

"I suppose it would," admitted the Shaggy Man smiling. "But how do you propose to get to Oz since we can't cross the Desert?"

"Then you really invite me to accompany you? That is wonderful! As for the Deadly Desert—I have a plan which might work."

"How did you know who the Shaggy Man was?" asked Twink.

"Oh, everyone knows about the Shaggy Man of Oz, and when I saw you here discussing your journey to Oz, I was almost sure this could be none other than the famous Shaggy Man."

Shaggy looked modestly down at the ground.

Chapter Fifteen

Twiffle asked: "Just how far are we from this Deadly Desert?"

"Quite a distance," replied the beaver King. "The Desert lies just beyond our own Kingdom which is in the hills and mountains you see in the distance."

"And what is your plan for crossing it?" asked the Shaggy Man.

"Come to my palace where you will be comfortable," said the King, "and we will discuss my plan."

"It must be a long walk," sighed Twink. "And the farther we go toward the Desert, the rockier and grayer the country becomes."

"Oh, we shan't walk. It will be much quicker to ride," declared the beaver King.

With that the King of the Fairy Beavers walked to the edge of the stream and uttered a shrill whistle. Shaggy and his friends followed the little animal. A few hundred feet below them the river curved to the left. Around this bend in the stream they could now see some twenty little heads—beavers swimming swiftly upstream, and pulling after them a barge-like boat with a canopy to shut out the rays of the sun.

In a few moments the boat was drawing near the

shore on which they stood. Twink could see that each of the little beavers wore a harness, connected to the boat by a rope of woven reeds. The boat, itself, was brightly painted and filled with soft, silken cushions.

"You will be my guests on the journey down the river to my Kingdom where it will give me great pleasure to welcome you to my humble abode."

Twink, Tom, the Shaggy Man, and Twiffle stepped into the boat. The Shaggy Man had to stoop a bit to miss the canopy, but once they were seated on the soft cushions there was room for all.

The King of the Fairy Beavers hitched himself into the front of the harness with the other beavers. "I hope you'll forgive me for not riding with you," he said, "but when I have guests, I like to do my share of the work—we beavers always enjoy working together, you know, and occasions like this give me an opportunity to forget I'm a King." The boat moved swiftly down the river, pulled easily by the team of strong little animals.

"Well, this certainly beats walking, your Majesty," said the Shaggy Man as he sighed with content and settled back among the cushions.

CHAPTER 16

In Beaver Land

TOM, who was especially fond of animals, longed to hold one of the little beavers and fondle it to his heart's content. And what fun it would be, the boy thought, just to jump into the stream and swim along with the busily paddling happy-looking little animals. But Tom contented himself with marveling at the ease with which the beavers pulled the boat.

Although the journey consumed more than an hour

it did not seem nearly that long to the travelers who were kept busy watching the changing scenery as the boat sped swiftly downstream. The banks of the river grew much steeper and they could see scarcely any trees, while grey rocks jutted from the earth and forbidding mountain peaks loomed only a few miles distant.

The beavers swam out of the current of the river and drew the boat into a placid pool among the rocks. At the far end of the pool there was a stairway leading from a wooden landing to a wicket door, set in the face of a cliff of grey stone that ran steeply down to the pond's edge.

The fairy beavers seemed to be full of energy and untired by the journey, as they chattered among themselves, drawing the boat to the landing and making it secure.

The Shaggy Man looked about him and observed to the King: "I always thought, your majesty, that beavers liked to live where there was plenty of wood. I've heard tell of them building whole series of dams from trees they had gnawed down—even human engineers have taken some lessons in water control from the beavers."

"You're right," replied the King of the Fairy Beavers.

"But those beavers you heard about were of the ordinary kind. Not that we fairy beavers don't do a lot of engineering—we do. But we prefer this desolate region for our home since we are less likely to be disturbed here.

And any trees we may need we can always fell and float downstream from the more fertile lands."

As he spoke the beaver King ascended the steps to the wicker door and swung it open. The Shaggy Man had to stoop to enter, but once inside he found he could stand with ease.

It took a few minutes for Shaggy and his friends to

adjust their eyes from the glare of the sun on the water to the lighting of the cave in which they stood. For that was what it was, a vast cave in the cliff. A fairy light of a silver white issued from the rock walls and dome of the cave.

The cavern proved to be merely the ante-room of the beaver kingdom, which consisted of a labyrinth of large and small tunnels burrowed into the earth at the rear of the cave. Sleek, well-fed beavers hurried in and out of the burrows, bent upon the tasks that made up their daily work. Indeed everyone in this underground kingdom seemed to be hard at work and intently busy on one task or another. New tunnels were being constructed and reinforced with carefully hewn beams of wood, new rooms and homes were under construction, and there didn't seem to be an idle moment with all the work that was going on. The beaver King was perhaps even busier than his subjects, and while he was gracious and did everything in his power to make his guests comfortable, they got the impression that even while he was chatting with them his mind was busy with new plans and ideas for the improvement of his kingdom.

The King of the Fairy Beavers hesitated only long

enough for Shaggy and his friends to glance about them, and then led his guests down one of the burrows, which was really a good-sized tunnel. A short distance down this passage the beaver King paused before a large, granite door set in the tunnel's side. Just above the door was mounted a golden crown.

"It is my pleasure," said the beaver King, as the heavy door swung open, "to welcome you to my royal suite where I hope you will accept my humble hospitality."

There was a large reception hall, then a huge throne room that could easily accommodate an assemblage of several thousand beavers, and finally a dining room with mirrored walls and ceiling and a sumptuously laid table.

Shaggy and his friends were amazed at the elegance and beauty of their surroundings. The dining room table was set with the finest of china and the linens were snowy white and hand woven.

The King of the Fairy Beavers still carried the slender beech rod, which Twink had noticed in his right paw when he had first appeared among them that afternoon. After inviting his guests to be seated at the table, the beaver King waved the beech rod—which Twink and Tom had already guessed to be his magic wand—and at

once the table was loaded with the most savory dishes imaginable.

"I don't ordinarily like to employ magic, unless it is necessary," the beaver King explained. "We beavers prefer to work for what we get but magic affords the quickest manner of providing the strange foods that you human beings seem to enjoy."

Twiffle and the beaver King conversed while Shaggy, Twink, and Tom enjoyed the food. They were much hungrier than they realized; the ride on the river had given them a tremendous appetite.

When they had finished eating the King of the Fairy Beavers said: "Now, my friends, would be a good time to plan our trip to the Land of Oz."

No one said a word, but every eye was fixed with eager attention on the little animal.

"We cannot fly over the Deadly Desert," the beaver King went on. "Nor can we cross it—the devouring sands would mean quick death for all of us."

"Then we're just not going to Oz, I guess," said Tom sadly.

"Oh, yes, I think we are," replied the beaver King quickly. "There is one way left to cross the Desert."

Chapter Sixteen

A hush fell over the company as they waited for the beaver King's next words.

"We can cross *under* the desert," he said simply.

"You have burrowed clear under the Deadly Desert to Oz?" asked the Shaggy Man incredulously.

"No," replied the King of the Fairy Beavers, "we have not, but someone else has."

"And who is that?" asked Twink.

"The Nome King," said the beaver King.

CHAPTER 17

The Tunnel Under the Desert

THE Shaggy Man leaped to his feet and stared at the beaver King. "What!" he exclaimed. "You discovered the Nome King's tunnel under the Deadly Desert?"

"Oh, yes," replied the beaver King. "We have known for some time of its existence and location."

"But this is wonderful!" gasped the Shaggy Man. "Our troubles are all over. All we have to do is walk through the tunnel to the Emerald City!"

Chapter Seventeen

"No," said the King of the Fairy Beavers. "It isn't as easy as that. You must remember we still have Glinda's Barrier of Invisibility to contend with."

"Hmmmmm," said the Shaggy Man seating himself, "that is true. But there might be some way we could get past that barrier. Tell me, how did you happen to discover the Nome King's tunnel?"

"We stumbled onto it accidentally when one of our burrows led into it," explained the beaver King. "We followed it to the Kingdom of the Nomes where the tunnel opens into one of the Nome King's mines. There was a company of Nomes working there, and the ill-natured creatures hurled diamonds at us. In fact the Nomes were so discourteous that we have never since entered that section of the tunnel."

"But if you knew the tunnel led to Oz in the other direction, why didn't you follow it?" asked Twiffle.

"Because we also know Ozma's wishes, and we respect them," replied the beaver King quietly. "But certainly Ozma would not object to the Shaggy Man and his friends using the tunnel. And since the Shaggy Man has so kindly invited me to visit Oz, I feel perfectly free to accompany him."

"Then you know the story of the tunnel the Nome King built under the Deadly Desert to the Emerald City?" asked the Shaggy Man.

"Our fairy powers keep us informed of important happenings not only in Oz but in all other parts of the world," replied the beaver King.

Twink and Tom knew the story, too. They had read how the Nome King, seeking revenge on Ozma and Dorothy because they had once conquered him, set his Nomes to burrowing a tunnel from the Nome Kingdom to the Emerald City. When it was finished, Roquat the Red (as the Nome King was known then) and a horde of evil allies marched through the tunnel, intent on conquering and laying waste all of Oz. Ozma refused to fight, but instead gathered all her closest friends about her in the garden near the Fountain of Oblivion, where the invaders were about to break through from the tunnel. The famous Scarecrow of Oz had given Ozma the idea that had saved her from the necessity of fighting. The tunnel was hot and dry, and Ozma had used her magic powers to scatter dust through the underground passage. As a result, when the Nome King and his allies came bursting through the earth they were consumed with a terrible

thirst. The first thing they saw was the Fountain of Oblivion. Just as the Scarecrow had planned, they all dashed to the fountain and drank. The waters of this fountain cause anyone who drinks of it to lose all memory of his former life. Consequently the Nome King and all his allies became as harmless as little children, having forgotten their former evil lives. Ozma had sent them back by means of the Magic Belt to their own lands, and then closed the earth over the tunnel's entrance into her garden. Soon after that Glinda had laid down the Magic Barrier of Invisibility over the Deadly Desert, which Ozma hoped would prevent any other invaders from attacking the Land of Oz.

"Trying to get through the tunnel really seems the only thing to do," said the Shaggy Man thoughtfully. "That will be far better than just sitting and waiting for Ozma to return to the Emerald City—I have no idea how long she plans to visit with Glinda. I suppose the only thing we can do is try to deal with the Barrier of Invisibility when we come to it. Perhaps your Majesty's magic could overcome it?"

The Beaver King was thoughtful. "Perhaps," he said. "But you must remember Glinda's magic is very power-

ful. We may discover that the desert is just as impassable underground as it is above ground. So don't let us raise our hopes too high, my friends. At any rate," he concluded, "we will undertake the journey in the morning, and then we shall know."

The beaver King led his guests into his throne room where comfortable seats were provided. Next a troop of beaver acrobats came running into the throne room. They wore brightly colored tights and put on a performance of such skill and daring that Twink and Tom were delighted. The animals were amazingly agile and some of their tumbling tricks were so droll that even Twiffle laughed aloud.

"I never saw anything to beat this at the circus," Tom confided to Twink as the twins loudly applauded.

When the entertainment was over it was growing late, and, saying he had some work to do in his magic workshop, in preparation for the journey in the morning, the beaver King led his guests to a suite of beautifully furnished sleeping rooms. Twink and Tom were not a bit surprised that the beaver King should work while they slept. Indeed, they wondered if anyone in this busy little kingdom ever took time off to rest.

"As soon as you lie down on the beds," the beaver King told Twink and Tom, "you will be lulled to sleep by the most beautiful music in the world." With that he closed the door softly and left them.

Twink and Tom were in their beds in no time at all,

eager to hear the music the beaver King had promised them.

No sooner had their heads touched the pillows than they heard it. It was like the sleepy murmuring of a thousand voices. There were no words, only a soft whisper that seemed to come from a great distance and yet was close

by—was everywhere. Twink closed her eyes, and the wordless music sang of green meadows under a golden sun, of mountain rills that tripped from stone to stone down to beautiful valleys, of great rivers that flowed through the hearts of vast lands—and finally of the sea itself, singing eternally of endless wonders.

Just before Tom dropped off to sleep he said: "Twink, I know what it is. The beaver King said it was the most beautiful music in the world—and it is—"

"I know," said Twink sleepily. "It's the music of running water."

CHAPTER 18

The Flame Folk

EARLY the next morning Shaggy and his friends found a steaming hot breakfast waiting for them in their rooms. No sooner had they finished than the King of the Fairy Beavers appeared to lead them to the Nome King's tunnel. They followed the King through several miles of weaving and twisting beaver burrows, until at last they stood at the entrance of the tunnel. Shaggy had noted that the King bore on his back, like

a tiny knapsack, a small bundle. Now he saw that the twenty young beavers, who were waiting at the tunnel's entrance to undertake the journey with them, bore similar though smaller bundles on their backs. In addition, each

of the young beavers carried a pine torch to light the way through the dark tunnel.

At a signal from the beaver King, the torch-bearing beavers advanced into the tunnel and the journey was on.

"How far are we from the Deadly Desert?" inquired the Shaggy Man.

"Not more than a mile," answered the beaver King.

"We will know when we reach the Desert, because of the heat radiated downward by the sands. The tunnel is not far from the surface—no more than twenty feet, I would judge."

The tunnel was hewn from solid rock, but the floor of it was smooth, so the travelers were able to proceed at a good rate of speed. They all noticed that the heat increased perceptibly the closer they came to the shifting sands above them.

"Whee-ew!" exclaimed the Shaggy Man. "This is no place for a pleasure trip. I can see why the Nome King was thirsty when he got out of here."

They were now directly under the Deadly Desert and the heat radiated by the shifting sands above them was intense. But Twink and Tom were lightly dressed, so they didn't mind the heat so much. Twiffle naturally paid not the slighest attention to the temperature. The beavers who were used to undergroud heat moved swiftly forward.

The pine torches of the young beavers cast flickering shadows on the rough stone walls about the travelers. But suddenly the light of the torches dimmed and faded in a greater brilliance.

Chapter Eighteen

The torch-bearing beavers stopped in their tracks and were chattering excitedly among themselves, waiting for the beaver King and his party to catch up with them.

The travelers hurried forward and found to their

amazement that the new light came from a rift in the rock roof. Sunlight was shining down into the tunnel!

But no sooner had they recovered from this surprise than they were overwhelmed by another. Directly ahead of them, blocking their passage through the tunnel, was a group of the strangest people they had ever seen.

These beings were human in shape, yet they seemed

to be made of flame. The living fire that formed their bodies varied in hue from a deep, glowing red to light orange and yellow, while their finger-tips, eyes, and features gave off blue and greenish colored flames.

There were perhaps ten of the creatures, standing side by side so that the beaver King and his friends found their way completely blocked by this wall of living flame. Waves of heat radiated from their flaming bodies, and Twink and Tom had to blink their eyes several times to become accustomed to the glare of flame and light.

"Halt! You can go no further. Turn back at once to

whence you came." One of the flame folk was speaking. He appeared to be their leader, since he was taller than his companions and his eyes glowed much more fiercely than the rest.

"Who are you?" asked the beaver King calmly.

"We are Dwellers of the Desert. We live on the shifting sands on the surface. Occasionally we visit the oasis just above, where there is no sand, but blue grass that glows with blue flame," the flame being answered.

"An oasis on the Deadly Desert?" asked the Shaggy Man incredulously.

"Certainly. Did you ever hear of a desert that didn't have an oasis?" replied the fire creature.

"Maybe not," muttered the Shaggy Man. "And I suppose the flame grass keeps the deadly sand from shifting into the tunnel."

"Exactly," replied the fire creature. "But we are not concerned with sand in the tunnel. There are other things much more objectionable—yourselves, for instance."

"How did you find out about the tunnel?" asked the beaver King ignoring the fire being's insult.

"Not that it is any of your business, but we were aware of the tunnel's existence while the Nome King

was building it. After he returned to his own silly kingdom, we burned our way down through the rocks from the oasis above."

"Why did you do that?" persisted the beaver King.

The leader of the fire creatures hesitated for a moment then replied in an angry voice: "Because we enjoy the coolness of the tunnel. By contrast it makes the fiery sands of the desert even more pleasant. Now, be on your way back where you came from or we will advance upon you and blast you to cinders."

"My, what a fiery tempered fellow," said Shaggy.

This seemed to infuriate the fire creature and he was about to leap toward Shaggy when the beaver King stepped forward, holding out his beechwood wand. Instantly, from the tip of the wand there came forth a spray of water that showered on the row of fire creatures. As soon as it touched their flaming bodies, the water hissed into steam.

The effect on the fire beings was amazing. They uttered loud howls of pain and fright and leaped like flames from a great fire into the air and through the rift in the rock. Their cries resounded as they dashed over the oasis to roll in the flaming sands of the desert.

"Come," urged the beaver King, "let us hurry, although I do not think there is any danger of pursuit."

The young beavers went first, followed by Shaggy and his friends. They hurried until they had passed out of sight of the sunlight that flowed down the rift into the tunnel.

"I guess that's the first time those critters ever saw water," said the Shaggy Man grinning.

"The water didn't hurt them," said the beaver King, "and the burning sands will soon restore whatever heat they lost. Nevertheless, I don't think they will cause us any further annoyance."

They walked ahead rapidly hour after hour with the young beavers lighting the way through the Nome King's tunnel.

CHAPTER 19

The Barrier of Invisibility

SUDDENLY Shaggy stopped and stared about him. He was alone in the tunnel! He had been walking along looking at nothing in particular, when in a flash his companions had vanished. Just ahead of him he could hear the excited chattering of the twenty young beavers. But there was no sign of any living thing. Then Shaggy looked down at himself and cried out in amazement—he wasn't there either!

He could see nothing of his body, although he felt as firm as ever.

"You will be kind enough to remove your wand from my eye, please!" It was Twiffle's voice speaking somewhere near Shaggy.

"I beg your pardon, we are both invisible, so my poking my wand in your eye was entirely unintentional, I assure you," the beaver King's voice answered.

"Hey! Stay off my foot!" Tom called out.

"Was that your foot? I'm sure I didn't see it," Twink's voice answered soothingly.

"Neither do I, but it's there just the same," replied Tom's voice ruefully.

All about them the young beaver's voices had risen, and several angry disputes were taking place. Evidently some accidents had occurred among the little animals, too.

The Shaggy Man said sadly, "Well, this seems to be the Barrier of Invisibility, and it's most effective too. I propose we all stay just where we are until we decide what to do for we all seem to be quite invisible."

"Must we turn back?" asked Twink anxiously.

"Don't you worry, Twink," said Tom, "even if we can't get to the Land of Oz, we'll find our way home."

Chapter Nineteen

"Yes, I think we must turn back," announced the beaver King. "Let us retreat in the tunnel to the point where the Barrier of Invisibility begins. It should be only a few feet from where we are now since we just entered it."

"But we have turned about and lost all sense of direction since becoming invisible," said the Shaggy Man. "Since we cannot see the tunnel, it looks the same in every direction, so how are we to know which way to turn to go back?"

"Walk ten steps in one direction and if you are still invisible, then turn about and walk twenty feet in the other direction," instructed the beaver King.

This they all did and after a bit of experimentation and several minor collisions, they were relieved to find themselves visible once more and standing on the edge of the Barrier of Invisibility.

At the King's order, the young beavers had remained where they were, until the others had found their way out of the Barrier. Now the beaver King uttered a series of calls that quickly guided the animals beyond the Barrier of Invisibility.

Shaggy and his friends stood about in the tunnel gazing

from one to another, almost despairingly, wondering what to do next.

"There is still hope that we may not have to go back and may be able to use the tunnel to reach Oz, my friends,"

began the beaver King quietly. "Last night and far into the morning, while you were sleeping, I was busy in my fairy workshop, studying the problem. I believe I have solved it, although, of course, we cannot be quite sure until we make the test."

With this the little animal unstrapped from his back the small bundle he had been carrying. Laying it on the

tunnel floor, he carefully unfolded it. The bundle seemed to consist of a number of shimmering pieces of silver cloth, so light they might have been spun from spider webs.

The beaver King selected one of the folds of gossamer cloth and handed it to Twink.

"Unfold it and put it about you, my dear," he said. "I think you will find it just your size."

Twink did as instructed and found the cloth fitted about her like a fairy cloak. "Oh, it's lovely," she exclaimed.

"It's more than that, I hope," said the beaver King. "It is a Cloak of Visibility."

"A cloak of what?" exclaimed the Shaggy Man.

"You have all heard and read tales of cloaks of invisibility," explained the beaver King. "Cloaks that make the wearer invisible are famous in the fairy tales of all lands. Well, I knew that we would become invisible today against our wishes, so I have attempted to create a Cloak of Visibility—a cloak that would overcome the spell of invisibility."

"Do you think it will work?" asked the Shaggy Man hopefully.

Chapter Nineteen

"I do not know," confessed the beaver King. "I am sure it wouldn't work above ground where Glinda's Barrier of Invisibility is full strength. Underground, Glinda's spell is much less intense, because the earth and sands absorb and destroy the fairy spell. Glinda is a fairy just as Ozma is, and fairies, you know, are creatures of the light and air, and it is there that their powers are the strongest."

The beaver King then handed out Cloaks of the shimmering material to all of them. There was a tiny one that fitted Twiffle perfectly. The twenty young beavers opened their knapsacks and drew from them their own Cloaks of Visibility, which they adjusted about themselves.

"Now we are ready to test the power of the Cloaks," said the beaver King. "They should not only make us visible, but should enable us to see the invisible." Twink thought she detected the slightest tremor in the King's voice. It was no wonder, she thought, for so much depended on those cloaks he had made.

Once again they proceeded into the tunnel, this time holding their breaths with excitement. Would the Cloaks of Visibility work? One – two – three – four – five steps

and they found themselves watching one another to see if they were still visible. Six - seven - eight - nine - ten steps—but no one breathed freely until they had counted twenty steps. They all were still visible! And they could still see the tunnel walls. The Cloaks of Visibility worked perfectly.

Eagerly the twenty young beavers took the lead again.

CHAPTER 20

At the End of the Tunnel

"SEEMS to me," remarked the Shaggy Man after they had progressed for some distance, "that by now we may have crossed the Barrier of Invisibility."

"You're right," agreed the beaver King. "And that means we are now journeying underground in the Land of Oz. It also means that the Cloaks of Visibility are no longer necessary for our journey, so I propose that we discard them here and I will destroy them so that they

may never be used by anyone else for reaching the Land of Oz."

Each of the traveler removed his shimmering cloak and placed it on a little pile in the center of the tunnel. When all the cloaks were there, the beaver King waved his beechwood wand over the little heap of silvery material and in a flash it had vanished.

"Seems a shame," murmured Twink, "they were so beautiful."

But Twink forgot the Cloaks as they journeyed on. She and Tom could scarcely believe it—just over their heads was the marvelous Land of Oz. They began talking of all the famous people who lived in Oz, and the boy and girl would probably have walked all night had not the King of the Fairy Beavers announced after they had been trudging steadily for more than six hours:

"My fairy powers tell me it is dark in the land above. That means we have been walking all day. I propose we stop and sleep here and resume our journey in the morning. We should reach the Emerald City shortly after noon."

The Shaggy Man looked a bit ruefully at the hard stone floor of the tunnel. "Well," he sighed, "in my wanderings

I have slept in less comfortable places. Twink can have my coat to rest her head on."

The beaver King chuckled softly. "Don't worry, Shaggy Man," he said, "I will provide beds for us. First let us enjoy a good dinner so that we will sleep the more soundly."

After the dinner two small beds and a large one magically appeared for Twink, Tom, and Shaggy. Although he did not need to sleep, Twiffle was provided with a little bed just his size. The beaver King curled up on a silken cushion. Other cushions were provided for the young beaver torch-bearers who took turns throughout the night sleeping and standing guard.

The next morning found them refreshed and eager to be on their way toward the Emerald City. The tunnel was cool now and they advanced rapidly. They were all weary of the sameness of the rocky tunnel walls and eager to reach the Land of Oz.

At last the young beavers who were leading the way came to a halt. For some distance the travelers had noticed that the tunnel had been gently sloping upward. Now they had arrived at its end. Just before them was a round patch of earth—a sort of "cork" of earth that

Ozma had set in the end of the tunnel where it emerged in her garden.

The young beavers knew exactly what to do. They set to work digging and burrowing around the rim of this patch of earth. When they had loosened it sufficiently

it would roll back into the tunnel, leaving free the exit for the Shaggy Man and his friends to emerge from the underground passage.

Twink and Tom watched in fascinated silence while the beavers worked. They were amazingly fast and skillful. Their paws fairly flew as they scooped out the earth

and then brushed it from behind them with their wide, flat tails.

In a few more seconds the beavers would be through the earth. The beaver King warned his comrades to step back in the tunnel, as the earth was about to come tumbling down.

There was a creaking and crashing of earth and stones, and the beavers dashed to safety. Suddenly loud roars of mingled anger and fright filled the tunnel. Sitting on the pile of earth that had crashed down into the tunnel, and glaring at them frightfully while he roared, was an enormous beast.

CHAPTER 21

The Wizard Is Excited

THE great beast that had plunged into the tunnel suddenly stopped roaring, shook the gravel and dirt from his mane and back, and said calmly:

"I'm surprised at you, Shaggy Man! What do you mean by digging holes in Ozma's garden and leaving them open for unsuspecting folks to fall into? I might very easily have broken a leg or fractured a paw."

The Shaggy Man was grinning broadly. "Ten to one

you were running away from something in an effort to work up your well-known, but careful courage to the point of fighting."

The huge lion looked down at the ground in embarrassment.

"You seem to know this great beast," said the beaver King, who had been regarding the sudden entrant into the tunnel with intense curiosity.

"Indeed, I do!" replied the Shaggy Man. "He's an old friend of mine and quite harmless—if he is your friend. For this, you see, is the famous Cowardly Lion of Oz."

Twink and Tom had been staring with fascination at the huge lion. It was the first time they had ever come face to face with so great a beast, and although they had read so much about the famous Cowardly Lion of Oz that they recognized him, he had looked so fierce when he had fallen into the tunnel that they would surely have been frightened had it not been for Shaggy's reassuring words.

"I don't know what this is all about, Shaggy," sighed the lion. "I was told Ozma had sent you out of the country on an errand for her, and now you turn up in

a hole in her garden with a group of strange people and animals."

"It can all be explained," soothed the Shaggy Man. "Meanwhile do you think you can help us out of here?"

"Of course," replied the Cowardly Lion, "any friends of yours are friends of mine. Just climb on my back and you will have no difficulty in pulling yourselves to level ground. Those little animals don't bite, do they?" The great lion looked anxiously at the beaver's sharp teeth. With a laugh Shaggy assured him he had nothing to fear.

The beavers and their King went first, followed by Twink and Tom, who found the lion's coat to be delightfully thick and soft, and finally by Twiffle and the Shaggy Man.

The Cowardly Lion leaped from the tunnel and surveyed Shaggy and his friends. "Children, animals, and a wooden clown—all popping up from what I now perceive is the Nome King's tunnel and not just a hole in the ground as I thought when I first tumbled into it. Tell me, Shaggy, have you had trouble with the Nome King again?"

Shaggy started to relate his adventures, but after a few words the Cowardly Lion interrupted him. "That can wait, you can tell me all about it later. The important thing is that you are here safely and—I almost forgot—there is plenty going on here!"

"What do you mean?" asked the Shaggy Man.

"Well, to tell the truth, I was running because I was frightened. Then the ground gave way beneath me and I fell into the tunnel."

"But why were you frightened?" persisted the Shaggy Man.

"Something is going on in the Royal Palace that I

don't understand. The Wizard is very excited. He claims someone has stolen his Black Bag of Magic Tools and locked the door of the tower that leads to his magic workshop so he can't get in. I overheard him telling Dorothy about it and they both seemed very upset. I decided I had better hide somewhere until I had gathered enough courage to lead an attack on the enemy."

The Shaggy Man smiled to himself. "You come with us," he said to the Lion. "First, I want you to meet my friends, Twink, Tom, Twiffle, and the King of the Fairy Beavers. Then we must find the Wizard and Dorothy and see what this is all about."

The Cowardly Lion acknowledged the introduction so cordially that Twink and Tom felt as if they had been friends for years.

They all walked through the beautiful gardens of Ozma's Royal Palace until they came to a large French door leading into a study. Here, by a stroke of good luck, they found Princess Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz, deep in conversation.

Dorothy and the Wizard looked up in amazement as Shaggy and his strangely assorted band of followers trailed into the study. Introductions were made again,

and this time Twink and Tom were very nearly tongue-tied as they realized they were actually in the company of a real Princess of the Fairyland of Oz, and the one and only Wizard of Oz. But Dorothy was so friendly and sweet that the little boy and girl felt quite at ease almost at once.

Shaggy told his story as briefly as possible, and then asked the Wizard for an explanation of what had been happening in the Palace.

"I wish I could tell you more definitely," said the Wizard ruefully. "But I am as mystified as anyone. Here is all I know: I had ordered the Royal Stables to have the Sawhorse saddled so that I might ride him to the College of Natural History, where I wished to consult some of the books written by Professor Wogglebug. I had placed on the ground my Black Bag of Magic Tools which I needed for some experiments I planned to make at the College. I was about to mount the Sawhorse and pick up the bag when suddenly from out of nowhere, a wild-eyed little man appeared. He gave me one stare, picked up my Black Bag, and dashed into the Palace. I was so startled that it was several moments before I called to him to stop. Then I went dashing into the

Palace after him. But the little man was nowhere to be seen. I hurried to Dorothy's rooms and she accompanied me to the throne room. Just as we entered the throne

room, the little man whisked past us and was up the tower stairs that lead to my magic workroom."

"Did he have the Black Bag then?" asked Shaggy.

"No, that's the strange part of it, he did not," replied the Wizard. "He locked the tower door securely after him, so Dorothy and I couldn't follow. We have searched everywhere, but there just is not a single trace of the Black Bag."

Chapter Twenty One

Twink and Tom listened, spellbound by the Wizard's story. Here they were—not only in the Emerald City of Oz, but in the midst of an adventure that excited even the famous Wizard of Oz!

"I just can't understand it," said the Wizard rubbing his bald head in perplexity.

"Well, can't we break down the door to the tower?" asked Dorothy.

"Perhaps we could, but there are six other doors after that one before my magic workroom can be reached. And all are protected by my own magic!" groaned the Wizard.

"Are there no other magic tools that can be used?" inquired Shaggy.

"None," said the Wizard despondently. "Ozma took Dorothy's Magic Belt with her when she went to visit Glinda, so we are helpless for the moment."

Twiffle had been listening with great interest. Now he said: "Tell me, was the little man who suddenly appeared quite fat and bald save for a fringe of white hair? And did he have blue eyes and a sort of cherry-like nose?"

"Why, yes, that describes him quite well, from the

glimpse I had of him," said the Wizard thoughtfully.

"I think," Twiffle went on quietly, "that if you had had the opportunity to observe him more closely, you would have seen that he wore on his wrist Ozma's Magic Compass!"

CHAPTER 22

Conjo in Control

"CONJO!" exclaimed the Shaggy Man. "Of course that's who it is. He used Ozma's Magic Compass to bring him to the Emerald City and then started his mischief!"

"I wonder what he wants—what his purpose is in hiding my Black Bag and then locking himself in the tower?" mused the Wizard.

"Perhaps," said Dorothy, "it would be a good thing

if Twiffle told us all he knows about this Conjo, since he seems to be better acquainted with him than anyone else is."

"A good idea," agreed the Wizard, and they all turned to Twiffle.

The little clown recounted his life with Conjo, telling all he could remember from the time when Conjo brought him to life to his escape with Shaggy and Twink and Tom in the Airmobile.

The Wizard considered. "Apparently the only really bad thing Conjo has done is to take these children out of their home and plan to make them prisoners. Outside of that he has been merely selfish, lazy, and foolishly vain. Perhaps if we tried to talk with him, we could prove the folly of his latest actions. He must know that as soon as Ozma returns he will be helpless before her fairy powers."

The Wizard led the way to Ozma's Grand Throne Room, on one side of which was the door that led to the tower and Magic Workroom. The young beavers and their King hurried along after the Wizard and Shaggy and the rest.

"Perhaps Conjo would listen to you," the Wizard sug-

gested to Twiffle, "if you asked him to come out and talk with us."

Twiffle walked to the tower door, knocked as loudly as he could on it, and said: "Come out, Conjo. It is foolish of you to hide away in there. These people want to talk with you and try to be your friends."

Everyone waited with hushed breath. Had Conjo heard? Would he come out?

After a few moments the door opened a crack, then slowly farther and farther, until Conjo stood revealed in the doorway. The little man was quivering with excitement.

"Yes," Conjo said with what was meant to be a smile, "I will talk to you. But don't any one of you come one step nearer this door. If you do, I will transform you all into door-mats and jumping-jacks."

"What do you want?" asked the Wizard quietly. "Why have you hidden my Black Bag of Magic Tools and shut me off from my Magic Workroom?"

"You should be able to figure that out," replied Conjo. "I had to do that to render you helpless. Without your magic you are powerless to defend yourselves. I now have at my command all of your magic as well as my

own. So, I rather think you will be glad enough to do as I say."

"And just what is that?" asked the Wizard.

"From now on," said Conjo, "*I* am the Wizard of Oz,

and *you*," Conjo pointed to the Wizard, "are my assistant!"

Dorothy gasped at the audacity of the little man, while the Shaggy Man laughed aloud. The Wizard could only whisper unbelievingly: "*You* want to be *me*?"

"No," said Conjo, who seemed relaxed now and enjoying the consternation he had created, "I want to be the

Wizard of Oz—it's only a title you know, and I deserve it just as much as you. I'm tired of being a wizard nobody knows about. Now I have all your magic so who is there to say I am not the Wizard of Oz? Ho, ho, ho—ha, ha, he, he, he!" The little man seemed vastly amused.

"Ozma will have something to say about this," said Dorothy indignantly. "If you think she'll let you come in here and steal all the Wizard's magic and then try to steal his name on top of all that you're very badly mistaken."

"I'll take care of Ozma when the time comes. After all, she's only a girl." said Conjo easily. "And now if you'll excuse me, I think I'll go up and study the Wizard's magic. Please set a place for me at dinner, I shall be quite hungry. And don't bother to look for the Wizard's Black Bag. You'll never find it. Ha, ha, ha, ho, ho, he, he, he!"

Conjo was about to close the door, when the King of the Fairy Beavers raised his beechwood wand. From the tip of it came a stream of water that played directly on Conjo's face. Conjo gasped and sputtered, opened his mouth to cry out, and the stream of water filled his mouth.

He choked and swallowed a large amount of the water. Immediately the stream ceased flowing from the beaver King's wand.

Conjo stared at them all with innocent wonder in his eyes.

"Where am I?" he said.

CHAPTER 23

Twiffle Says Goodbye

CONJO wandered from the doorway of the tower toward the Wizard and his friends.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked the Wizard amiably.

Then the fat little man saw the young beavers. He immediately seated himself on the floor and called to the animals to play with him.

"I think his Majesty, the King of the Fairy Beavers,

can explain what has happened to Conjo," said the Wizard.

"It is very simple," replied the beaver King. "As I have told you, I am fairly proficient in water magic. So,

when I saw that Conjo could not be talked out of his mischievousness and that he meant further trouble, I directed a stream of water through my Fairy Wand toward Conjo. The water came from Ozma's Fountain of Oblivion."

"Then Conjo has forgotten all his bad ways and all his magic powers?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes," replied the beaver King. "He is now as harmless as a child. The water of the Fountain of Oblivion is truly wonderful. With Ozma's gracious permission I shall take a quantity of it back to my kingdom with me when I return."

"You have the permission now, your Majesty," said a girlish voice.

All eyes turned to the throne from which the voice came. There sat Ozma, regarding them with a quiet smile.

"I returned only a moment ago," Ozma said. "Just in time to see the outcome of Conjo's ambitious schemes and to grant the request of our good friend the King of the Fairy Beavers. I am sure he will use the water from the Fountain of Oblivion wisely and well."

"Then you know all about our adventures?" asked the Shaggy Man.

"Yes," replied Ozma. "Glinda and I finished our tasks on which we have been working steadily, and only a few minutes ago we hurried to open Glinda's Great Book of Records and brought ourselves up to date on what has happened to you, Shaggy and your friends, as well as the events transpiring here in the Emerald City during

my absence. Now that we are together I am happy to greet all my friends old and new," Ozma concluded, smiling at Twink and Tom.

The Wizard stepped to the side of Conjo, who was still seated on the throne room floor prattling to the beavers. He reached down and unfastened from Conjo's wrist Ozma's Magic Compass.

The Girl Ruler received the magic instrument gravely, her eyes upon Conjo. "I wonder," she said, "what we should do with him. He is quite harmless now, but we don't want him to learn his old, bad ways again."

Here Twiffle stepped forward. "Your Highness," the little clown began, "if I may make a suggestion. I have known Conjo longer than anyone else here. He is not really a bad man. His threats are worse than his deeds. Most of the time he is quite jovial and pleasant. He loves his magic and his wizardry and wants to show off. Now that he has a chance to begin all over again, if he learned everything again except vanity and if he had the right guide, I believe it is possible that he might become a good wizard."

"And you want to be that guide," said Ozma smiling kindly at Twiffle. "What do you think, Wizard?"

"I believe Twiffle is right," said the Wizard. "Conjo needs someone to help him now, and Twiffle seems the person to do it."

"I am very fond of my old home on the island and I would like to help Conjo," said Twiffle simply.

"For my part, Twiffle is a brick," put in the Shaggy Man heartily.

"Then it is decided," replied Ozma. "I will use the Magic Belt to send Conjo and Twiffle back to the Isle of Conjo. There, Twiffle will help Conjo to become a thoroughly good wizard. Here, Twiffle," Ozma removed a small golden ring from her finger and handed it to Twiffle. "Keep this ring with you always. Should Conjo ever again cause any mischief, or should you need my help, just rub this ring and you will be transported immediately to wherever I may be."

"Thank you, your Majesty," said Twiffle, looking at Ozma gratefully.

Twiffle then bade a fond farewell to Twink and Tom, the Shaggy Man, the King of the Fairy Beavers, and all his other new friends. When he had finished, Ozma placed her hands on the Magic Belt and murmured a command.

Twink and Tom looked about the throne room. Conjo and Twiffle were nowhere to be seen. The children knew they would miss the little toy clown. But perhaps he would come to their home sometimes to visit his third cousin, Twoffle.

CHAPTER 24

Twink and Tom in Oz

THE remainder of the day was given over to sight-seeing for Twink, Tom, the King of the Fairy Beavers, and the young beavers.

Dorothy and the Shaggy Man loaded the party into the Red Wagon, which was drawn by the Sawhorse, and conducted their guests on a tour of the beautiful City of Emeralds and the nearby countryside.

When they reached the gates of the Emerald City, the

Shaggy Man ordered the Sawhorse to stop while he, with the aid of Omby Amby, a bright new nail and a hammer, proudly restored the Love Magnet to its position over the entrance to the city.

The company then drove out to call on Miss Cutten-

clip and her famous village whose inhabitants were artfully cut out of magic paper and moved about and talked like living people. Next they visited Professor Wogglebug in his College, where the students learned their lessons by swallowing sugar-coated pills.

On the return journey they met the Scarecrow who

had been spending the day with a Munchkin Farmer for the purpose of being re-stuffed with fresh new straw—all except his head, of course, which was filled with the marvelous brains the Wizard had given him. Twink and Tom were delighted with this droll personage, who took an instant liking to them.

That evening there was a great dinner in honor of Twink, Tom, and the King of the Fairy Beavers. Many of the most famous personages of Oz were there. Among these were the Patchwork Girl, the Tin Woodman who had traveled from his tin castle in the Winkie country for the occasion, Princess Ozana, the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger, Ojo, Button Bright, Betsy Bobbin, Trot, Cap'n Bill, the Woozy, and many, many others.

It was a wonderful dinner, and Twink and Tom were fascinated by all the curious and unusual personalities. The twins felt as if they were among old friends, since they had read so much about the famous people of Oz and their exciting adventures.

On such occasions as this, it was always the custom of the Wizard to put on a display of his magic. Tonight he did not. In fact the Little Wizard seemed silent and worried throughout the dinner.

Chapter Twenty Four

As the guests began to leave the table, the Wizard approached Ozma unhappily. "I can't imagine what Conjo did with my Black Bag of Magic Tools," he said.

"We should have questioned him before you sent him back to the Isle of Conjo."

Ozma shook her head. "That would have done no good. Conjo lost all memory of his former actions when he drank of the waters of the Fountain of Oblivion."

The only others remaining around the table now were Dorothy, Shaggy, Twink, Tom, and the beaver King.

"Did you look in the Magic Picture to see where

Conjo might have hidden the Black Bag?" Ozma asked.

"No," said the Wizard, "we were so excited and things happened so swiftly that we never thought of the Magic Picture."

"Then let us consult the picture immediately," said Ozma.

The Girl Ruler rose and motioned the rest to follow her as she made her way to her suite of rooms and the Magic Picture.

CHAPTER 25

The Black Bag of Magic Tools

OZMA swept the velvet drape from the Magic Picture. There was the familiar scene that appeared when the Picture was not in use—a peaceful Oz countryside with rolling fields and hills and a large tree growing in the foreground.

"Show us the Wizard's Black Bag of Magic Tools," Ozma said.

There was no change in the picture.

"What can be wrong?" whispered Dorothy soberly.

"Perhaps the Magic Picture can only show *people* and not *things*," suggested the Shaggy Man. "I don't recall our ever having asked it to show an *object* before."

Ozma's face was puzzled. She was staring intently at

the familiar picture. "No," she said quietly. "I think the Magic Picture is doing its best to show us the Black Bag right now."

Everyone looked at Ozma in astonishment. There was nothing in the Magic Picture that looked anything like the Black Bag. It was merely the old familiar scene

that the magic picture showed when it was not in use.

"Conjo was very clever in a way," said Ozma. "He hid the Black Bag by means of his wizard powers in a place where few people would think to look. But he forgot that the Magic Picture is my own fairy creation, and I understand its magic better than anyone else."

The Little Ruler paused, saying to those around her: "Watch this closely now." She murmured a fairy charm so softly that none of the group could distinguish the words.

Something was moving in the Magic Picture. From behind the trunk of the tree that arose in the foreground of the picture, slipped a small black object. It grew larger and larger until it filled a quarter of the picture. Then it fell out of the picture-frame to the floor.

It was the Wizard's Black Bag of Magic Tools!

The Little Wizard leaped forward and gratefully seized his precious Black Bag.

"So Conjo hid it behind the tree in the Magic Picture!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER 26

Twink and Tom Home Again

IT is growing quite late," Ozma said, turning to Twink and Tom. "And I am sure you children must be tired after the strenuous adventures of the day." The Little Ruler paused and then added, "I know, too, that you are anxious to return home to your parents."

Twink nodded. "Yes, your Highness," she said. "We have had a wonderful time in Oz, and we love you all very dearly, but we must go home as soon as we can."

"Twink's right," agreed Tom. "We have had a great time, and I wouldn't have missed it for anything, but we belong at home in Buffalo."

Ozma smiled her most charming smile. "Very well,"

she said. "We will say goodbye now. Then Dorothy and the Shaggy Man will show you to your room where beds are prepared for you. While you sleep, I will use the Magic Belt to transport you to your beds in your own home."

Twink and Tom bade goodnight and goodbye to Ozma and the King of the Fairy Beavers. The little animal had

accepted Ozma's invitation to be her guest as long as he felt he could absent himself from his Kingdom.

Then Dorothy and the Shaggy Man led Twink and Tom to one of the most beautiful sleeping rooms the children had ever seen. The four talked together for a short time, after which Dorothy and Shaggy said farewell and slipped quietly from the room.

It had been a long, exciting day, and Twink and Tom had no difficulty falling asleep, although they knew that sometime during the night they would travel magically from the Land of Oz to their own beds in their home in far-away Buffalo.

* * * * * *

And that was just what happened.

HOME
SWEET
HOME