

Chapter Fifteen - The Flight of the Rulers

Now it seems that when Queen Cor fled from her island to Regos, she had wit enough, although greatly frightened, to make a stop at the royal dairy, which was near to the bridge, and to drag poor Queen Garee from the butter-house and across to Regos with her. The warriors of King Gos had never before seen the terrible Queen Cor frightened, and therefore when she came running across the bridge of boats, dragging the Queen of Pingaree after her by one arm, the woman's great fright had the effect of terrifying the waiting warriors.

"Quick!" cried Cor. "Destroy the bridge, or we are lost."

While the men were tearing away the bridge of boats the Queen ran up to the palace of Gos, where she met her husband.

"That boy is a wizard!" she gasped. "There is no standing against him."

"Oh, have you discovered his magic at last?" replied Gos, laughing in her face. "Who, now, is the coward?"

"Don't laugh!" cried Queen Cor. "It is no laughing matter. Both our islands are as good as conquered, this very minute. What shall we do, Gos?"

"Come in," he said, growing serious, "and let us talk it over."

So they went into a room of the palace and talked long and earnestly.

"The boy intends to liberate his father and mother, and all the people of Pingaree, and to take them back to their island," said Cor. "He may also destroy our palaces and make us his slaves. I can see but one way, Gos, to prevent him from doing all this, and whatever else he pleases to do."

"What way is that?" asked King Gos.

"We must take the boy's parents away from here as quickly as possible. I have with me the Queen of Pingaree, and you can run up to the mines and get the King. Then we will carry them away in a boat and hide them where the boy cannot find them, with all his magic. We will use the King and Queen of Pingaree as hostages, and send word to the boy wizard that if he does not go away from our islands and allow us to rule them undisturbed, in our own way, we will put his father and mother to death. Also we will say that as long as we are let alone his parents will be safe, although still safely hidden. I

believe, Gos, that in this way we can compel Prince Ingato obey us, for he seems very fond of his parents."

"It isn't a bad idea," said Gos, reflectively; "but where can we hide the King and Queen, so that the boy cannot find them?"

"In the country of the Nome King, on the mainland away at the south," she replied. "The nomes are our friends, and they possess magic powers that will enable them to protect the prisoners from discovery. If we can manage to get the King and Queen of Pingaree to the Nome Kingdom before the boy knows what we are doing, I am sure our plot will succeed."

Gos gave the plan considerable thought in the next five minutes, and the more he thought about it the more clever and reasonable it seemed. So he agreed to do as Queen Cor suggested and at once hurried away to the mines, where he arrived before Prince Inga did. The next morning he carried King Kitticut back to Regos.

While Gos was gone, Queen Cor busied herself in preparing a large and swift boat for the journey. She placed in it several bags of gold and jewels with which to bribe the nomes, and selected forty of the strongest oarsmen in Regos to row the boat. The instant King Gos returned with his royal prisoner all was ready for departure. They quickly entered the boat with their two important captives and without a word of explanation to any of their people they commanded the oarsmen to start, and were soon out of sight upon the broad expanse of the Nonestic Ocean.

Inga arrived at the city some hours later and was much distressed when he learned that his father and mother had been spirited away from the islands.

"I shall follow them, of course," said the boy to Rinkitink, "and if I cannot overtake them on the ocean I will search the world over until I find them. But before I leave here I must arrange to send our people back to Pingaree."