

Chapter Twenty Three - The Pearl Kingdom

It was unfortunate that the famous Scarecrow--the most popular person in all Oz, next to Ozma--was absent at the time of the banquet, for he happened just then to be making one of his trips through the country; but the Scarecrow had a chance later to meet Rinkitink and Inga and the King and Queen of Pingaree and Prince Bobo, for the party remained several weeks at the Emerald City, where they were royally entertained, and where both the gentle Queen Garee and the noble King Kitticut recovered much of their good spirits and composure and tried to forget their dreadful experiences.

At last, however, the King and Queen desired to return to their own Pingaree, as they longed to be with their people again and see how well they had rebuilt their homes. Inga also was anxious to return, although he had been very happy in Oz, and King Rinkitink, who was happy anywhere except at Gilgad, decided to go with his former friends to Pingaree. As for prince Bobo, he had become so greatly attached to King Rinkitink that he was loth to leave him.

On a certain day they all bade good-bye to Ozma and Dorothy and Glinda and the Wizard and all their good friends in Oz, and were driven in the Red Wagon to the edge of the Deadly Desert, which they crossed safely on the Magic Carpet. They then made their way across the Nome Kingdom and the Wheeler Country, where no one molested them, to the shores of the Nonestic Ocean. There they found the boat with the silver lining still lying undisturbed on the beach.

There were no important adventures during the trip and on their arrival at the pearl kingdom they were amazed at the beautiful appearance of the island they had left in ruins. All the houses of the people had been rebuilt and were prettier than before, with green lawns before them and flower gardens in the back yards. The marble towers of King Kitticut's new palace were very striking and impressive, while the palace itself proved far more magnificent than it had been before the warriors from Regos destroyed it.

Nikobob had been very active and skillful in directing all this work, and he had also built a pretty cottage for himself, not far from the King's palace, and there Inga found Zella, who was living very happy and contented in her new home. Not only had Nikobob accomplished all this in a comparatively brief space of time, but he had started the pearl fisheries again and when King

Kitticut returned to Pingaree he found a quantity of fine pearls already in the royal treasury.

So pleased was Kitticut with the good judgment, industry and honesty of the former charcoal-burner of Regos, that he made Nikobob his Lord High Chamberlain and put him in charge of the pearl fisheries and all the business matters of the island kingdom.

They all settled down very comfortably in the new palace and the Queen gathered her maids about her once more and set them to work embroidering new draperies for the royal throne. Inga placed the three Magic Pearls in their silken bag and again deposited them in the secret cavity under the tiled flooring of the banquet hall, where they could be quickly secured if danger ever threatened the now prosperous island.

King Rinkitink occupied a royal guest chamber built especially for his use and seemed in no hurry to leave his friends in Pingaree. The fat little King had to walk wherever he went and so missed Bilbil more and more; but he seldom walked far and he was so fond of Prince BoBo that he never regretted Bilbil's disenchantment.

Indeed, the jolly monarch was welcome to remain forever in Pingaree, if he wished to, for his merry disposition set smiles on the faces of all his friends and made everyone near him as jolly as he was himself. When King Kitticut was not too busy with affairs of state he loved to join his guest and listen to his brother monarch's songs and stories. For he found Rinkitink to be, with all his careless disposition, a shrewd philosopher, and in talking over their adventures one day the King of Gilgad said:

"The beauty of life is its sudden changes. No one knows what is going to happen next, and so we are constantly being surprised and entertained. The many ups and downs should not discourage us, for if we are down, we know that a change is coming and we will go up again; while those who are up are almost certain to go down. My grandfather had a song which well expresses this and if you will listen I will sing it."

"Of course I will listen to your song," returned Kitticut, "for it would be impolite not to."

So Rinkitink sang his grandfather's song:

"A mighty King once ruled the land-- But now he's baking pies. A pauper,
on the other hand, Is ruling, strong and wise.

A tiger once in jungles raged-- But now he's in a zoo; A lion, captive-born
and caged, Now roams the forest through.

A man once slapped a poor boy's pate And made him weep and wail. The
boy became a magistrate And put the man in jail.

A sunny day succeeds the night; It's summer--then it snows! Right oft
goes wrong and wrong comes right, As ev'ry wise man knows."