

## 20. Princess Ozma Of Oz

The royal historians of Oz, who are fine writers and know any number of big words, have often tried to describe the rare beauty of Ozma and failed because the words were not good enough. So of course I cannot hope to tell you how great was the charm of this little Princess, or how her loveliness put to shame all the sparkling jewels and magnificent luxury that surrounded her in this her royal palace. Whatever else was beautiful or dainty or delightful of itself faded to dullness when contrasted with Ozma's bewitching face, and it has often been said by those who know that no other ruler in all the world can ever hope to equal the gracious charm of her manner.

Everything about Ozma attracted one, and she inspired love and the sweetest affection rather than awe or ordinary admiration. Dorothy threw her arms around her little friend and hugged and kissed her rapturously, and Toto barked joyfully and Button-Bright smiled a happy smile and consented to sit on the soft cushions close beside the Princess.

"Why didn't you send me word you were going to have a birthday party?" asked the little Kansas girl, when the first greetings were over.

"Didn't I?" asked Ozma, her pretty eyes dancing with merriment.

"Did you?" replied Dorothy, trying to think.

"Who do you imagine, dear, mixed up those roads, so as to start you wandering in the direction of Oz?" inquired the Princess.

"Oh! I never 'spected YOU of that," cried Dorothy.

"I've watched you in my Magic Picture all the way here," declared Ozma, "and twice I thought I should have to use the Magic Belt to save you and transport you to the Emerald City. Once was when the Scoodlers caught you, and again when you reached the Deadly Desert. But the shaggy man was able to help you out both times, so I did not interfere."

"Do you know who Button-Bright is?" asked Dorothy.

"No; I never saw him until you found him in the road, and then only in my Magic Picture."

"And did you send Polly to us?"

"No, dear; the Rainbow's Daughter slid from her father's pretty arch just in time to meet you."

"Well," said Dorothy, "I've promised King Dox of Foxville and King Kik-a-bray of Dunkiton that I'd ask you to invite them to your party."

"I have already done that," returned Ozma, "because I thought it would please you to favor them."

"Did you 'vite the Musicker?" asked Button-Bright.

"No; because he would be too noisy, and might interfere with the comfort of others. When music is not very good, and is indulged in all the time, it is better that the performer should be alone," said the Princess.

"I like the Musicker's music," declared the boy, gravely.

"But I don't," said Dorothy.

"Well, there will be plenty of music at my celebration," promised Ozma; "so I've an idea Button-Bright won't miss the Musicker at all."

Just then Polychrome danced in, and Ozma rose to greet the Rainbow's Daughter in her sweetest and most cordial manner.

Dorothy thought she had never seen two prettier creatures together than these lovely maidens; but Polly knew at once her own dainty beauty could not match that of Ozma, yet was not a bit jealous because this was so.

The Wizard of Oz was announced, and a dried-up, little, old man, clothed all in black, entered the drawing-room. His face was cheery and his eyes twinkling with humor, so Polly and Button-Bright were not at all afraid of the wonderful personage whose fame as a humbug magician had spread throughout the world. After greeting Dorothy with much affection, he stood modestly behind Ozma's throne and listened to the lively prattle of the young people.

Now the shaggy man appeared, and so startling was his appearance, all clad in shaggy new raiment, that Dorothy cried "Oh!" and clasped her hands impulsively as she examined her friend with pleased eyes.

"He's still shaggy, all right," remarked Button-Bright; and Ozma nodded brightly because she had meant the shaggy man to remain shaggy when she provided his new clothes for him.

Dorothy led him toward the throne, as he was shy in such fine company, and presented him gracefully to the Princess, saying:

"This, your Highness, is my friend, the shaggy man, who owns the Love Magnet."

"You are welcome to Oz," said the girl Ruler, in gracious accents. "But tell me, sir, where did you get the Love Magnet which you say you own?"

The shaggy man grew red and looked downcast, as he answered in a low voice:

"I stole it, your Majesty."

"Oh, Shaggy Man!" cried Dorothy. "How dreadful! And you told me the Eskimo gave you the Love Magnet."

He shuffled first on one foot and then on the other, much embarrassed.

"I told you a falsehood, Dorothy," he said; "but now, having bathed in the Truth Pond, I must tell nothing but the truth."

"Why did you steal it?" asked Ozma, gently.

"Because no one loved me, or cared for me," said the shaggy man, "and I wanted to be loved a great deal. It was owned by a girl in Butterfield who was loved too much, so that the young men quarreled over her, which made her unhappy. After I had stolen the Magnet from her, only one young man continued to love the girl, and she married him and regained her happiness."

"Are you sorry you stole it?" asked the Princess.

"No, your Highness; I'm glad," he answered; "for it has pleased me to be loved, and if Dorothy had not cared for me I could not have accompanied her to this beautiful Land of Oz, or met its kind-hearted Ruler. Now that I'm here, I hope to remain, and to become one of your Majesty's most faithful subjects."

"But in Oz we are loved for ourselves alone, and for our kindness to one another, and for our good deeds," she said.

"I'll give up the Love Magnet," said the shaggy man, eagerly; "Dorothy shall have it."

"But every one loves Dorothy already," declared the Wizard.

"Then Button-Bright shall have it."

"Don't want it," said the boy, promptly.

"Then I'll give it to the Wizard, for I'm sure the lovely Princess Ozma does not need it."

"All my people love the Wizard, too," announced the Princess, laughing; "so we will hang the Love Magnet over the gates of the Emerald City, that whoever shall enter or leave the gates may be loved and loving."

"That is a good idea," said the shaggy man; "I agree to it most willingly."

Those assembled now went in to dinner, which you can imagine was a grand affair; and afterward Ozma asked the Wizard to give them an exhibition of his magic.

The Wizard took eight tiny white piglets from an inside pocket and set them on the table. One was dressed like a clown, and performed funny antics, and the others leaped over the spoons and dishes and ran around the table like race-horses, and turned hand-springs and were so sprightly and amusing that they kept the company in one roar of merry laughter. The Wizard had trained these pets to do many curious things, and they were so little and so cunning and soft that Polychrome loved to pick them up as they passed near her place and fondle them as if they were kittens.

It was late when the entertainment ended, and they separated to go to their rooms.

"To-morrow," said Ozma, "my invited guests will arrive, and you will find among them some interesting and curious people, I promise you. The next day will be my birthday, and the festivities will be held on the broad green just outside the gates of the City, where all my people can assemble without being crowded."

"I hope the Scarecrow won't be late," said Dorothy, anxiously.

"Oh, he is sure to return to-morrow," answered Ozma. "He wanted new straw to stuff himself with, so he went to the Munchkin Country, where straw is plentiful."

With this the Princess bade her guests good night and went to her own room.