

Chapter Twenty-Four

Dorothy is Delighted

"Well," said Queen Ann, when all were again seated in Kaliko's royal cavern, "I wonder what we shall do next. If I could find my way back to Oogaboo I'd take my army home at once, for I'm sick and tired of these dreadful hardships."

"Don't you want to conquer the world?" asked Betsy.

"No; I've changed my mind about that," admitted the Queen. "The world is too big for one person to conquer and I was happier with my own people in Oogaboo. I wish--Oh, how earnestly I wish--that I was back there thisminute!"

"So do I!" yelled every officer in a fervent tone.

Now, it is time for the reader to know that in the far-away Land of Oz the lovely Ruler, Ozma, had been following the adventures of her Shaggy Man, and Tik-Tok, and all the others they had met. Day by day Ozma, with the wonderful Wizard of Oz seated beside her, had gazed upon a Magic Picture in a radium frame, which occupied one side of the Ruler's cosy boudoir in the palace of the Emerald City. The singular thing about this Magic Picture was that it showed whatever scene Ozma wished

to see, with the figures all in motion, just as it was taking place. So Ozma and the Wizard had watched every action of the adventurers from the time Shaggy had met shipwrecked Betsy and Hank in the Rose Kingdom, at which time the Rose Princess, a distant cousin of Ozma, had been exiled by her heartless subjects.

When Ann and her people so earnestly wished to return to Oogaboo, Ozma was sorry for them and remembered that Oogaboo was a corner of the Land of Oz. She turned to her attendant and asked:

"Can not your magic take these unhappy people to their old home, Wizard?"

"It can, Your Highness," replied the little Wizard.

"I think the poor Queen has suffered enough in her misguided effort to conquer the world," said Ozma, smiling at the absurdity of the undertaking, "so no doubt she will hereafter be contented in her own little Kingdom. Please send her there, Wizard, and with her the officers and Files."

"How about the Rose Princess?" asked the Wizard.

"Send her to Oogaboo with Files," answered Ozma. "They have become such good friends that I am sure it would make them unhappy to separate them."

"Very well," said the Wizard, and without any fuss or mystery whatever he performed a magical rite that was simple and effective. Therefore those seated in the Nome King's cavern were both startled and amazed when all the people of Oogaboo suddenly disappeared from the room, and with them the Rose Princess. At first they could not understand it at all; but presently Shaggy suspected the truth, and believing that Ozma was now taking an interest in the party he drew from his pocket a tiny instrument which he placed against his ear.

Ozma, observing this action in her Magic Picture, at once caught up a similar instrument from a table beside her and held it to her own ear. The two instruments recorded the same delicate vibrations of sound and formed a wireless telephone, an invention of the Wizard. Those separated by any distance were thus enabled to converse together with perfect ease and without any wire connection.

"Do you hear me, Shaggy Man?" asked Ozma.

"Yes, Your Highness," he replied.

"I have sent the people of Oogaboo back to their own little valley," announced the Ruler of Oz; "so do not worry over their disappearance."

"That was very kind of you," said Shaggy. "But Your Highness must permit me to report that my own mission here is now ended. I have found

my lost brother, and he is now beside me, freed from the enchantment of ugliness which Ruggedo cast upon him. Tik-Tok has served me and my comrades faithfully, as you requested him to do, and I hope you will now transport the Clockwork Man back to your fairyland of Oz."

"I will do that," replied Ozma. "But how about yourself, Shaggy?"

"I have been very happy in Oz," he said, "but my duty to others forces me to exile myself from that delightful land. I must take care of my new-found brother, for one thing, and I have a new comrade in a dear little girl named Betsy Bobbin, who has no home to go to, and no other friends but me and a small donkey named Hank. I have promised Betsy never to desert her as long as she needs a friend, and so I must give up the delights of the Land of Oz forever."

He said this with a sigh of regret, and Ozma made no reply but laid the tiny instrument on her table, thus cutting off all further communication with the Shaggy Man. But the lovely Ruler of Oz still watched her magic picture, with a thoughtful expression upon her face, and the little Wizard of Oz watched Ozma and smiled softly to himself.

In the cavern of the Nome King Shaggy replaced the wireless telephone in his pocket and turning to Betsy said in as cheerful a voice as he could muster:

"Well, little comrade, what shall we do next?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," she answered with a puzzled face. "I'm kind of sorry our adventures are over, for I enjoyed them, and now that Queen Ann and her people are gone, and Polychrome is gone, and--dear me!--where's Tik-Tok, Shaggy?"

"He also has disappeared," said Shaggy, looking around the cavern and nodding wisely. "By this time he is in Ozma's palace in the Land of Oz, which is his home."

"Isn't it your home, too?" asked Betsy.

"It used to be, my dear; but now my home is wherever you and my brother are. We are wanderers, you know, but if we stick together I am sure we shall have a good time."

"Then," said the girl, "let us get out of this stuffy, underground cavern and go in search of new adventures. I'm sure it has stopped raining."

"I'm ready," said Shaggy, and then they bade good-bye to King Kaliko, and thanked him for his assistance, and went out to the mouth of the passage.

The sky was now clear and a brilliant blue in color; the sun shone brightly and even this rugged, rocky country seemed delightful after

their confinement underground. There were but four of them now--Betsy and Hank, and Shaggy and his brother--and the little party made their way down the mountain and followed a faint path that led toward the southwest.

During this time Ozma had been holding a conference with the Wizard, and later with Tik-Tok, whom the magic of the Wizard had quickly transported to Ozma's palace. Tik-Tok had only words of praise for Betsy Bobbin, "who," he said, "is al-most as nice as Dor-o-thy her-self."

"Let us send for Dorothy," said Ozma, and summoning her favorite maid, who was named Jellia Jamb, she asked her to request Princess Dorothy to attend her at once. So a few moments later Dorothy entered Ozma's room and greeted her and the Wizard and Tik-Tok with the same gentle smile and simple manner that had won for the little girl the love of everyone she met.

"Did you want to see me, Ozma?" she asked.

"Yes, dear. I am puzzled how to act, and I want your advice."

"I don't b'lieve it's worth much," replied Dorothy, "but I'll do the best I can. What is it all about, Ozma?"

"You all know," said the girl Ruler, addressing her three friends,

"what a serious thing it is to admit any mortals into this fairyland of Oz. It is true I have invited several mortals to make their home here, and all of them have proved true and loyal subjects. Indeed, no one of you three was a native of Oz. Dorothy and the Wizard came here from the United States, and Tik-Tok came from the Land of Ev. But of course he is not a mortal. Shaggy is another American, and he is the cause of all my worry, for our dear Shaggy will not return here and desert the new friends he has found in his recent adventures, because he believes they need his services."

"Shaggy Man was always kind-hearted," remarked Dorothy. "But who are these new friends he has found?"

"One is his brother, who for many years has been a prisoner of the Nome King, our old enemy Ruggedo. This brother seems a kindly, honest fellow, but he has done nothing to entitle him to a home in the Land of Oz."

"Who else?" asked Dorothy.

"I have told you about Betsy Bobbin, the little girl who was shipwrecked--in much the same way you once were--and has since been following the Shaggy Man in his search for his lost brother. You remember her, do you not?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Dorothy. "I've often watched her and Hank in the

Magic Picture, you know. She's a dear little girl, and old Hank is a darling! Where are they now?"

"Look and see," replied Ozma with a smile at her friend's enthusiasm.

Dorothy turned to the Picture, which showed Betsy and Hank, with Shaggy and his brother, trudging along the rocky paths of a barren country.

"Seems to me," she said, musingly, "that they're a good way from any place to sleep, or any nice things to eat."

"You are right," said Tik-Tok. "I have been in that coun-try, and it is a wil-der-ness."

"It is the country of the nomes," explained the Wizard, "who are so mischievous that no one cares to live near them. I'm afraid Shaggy and his friends will endure many hardships before they get out of that rocky place, unless--"

He turned to Ozma and smiled.

"Unless I ask you to transport them all here?" she asked.

"Yes, your Highness."

"Could your magic do that?" inquired Dorothy.

"I think so," said the Wizard.

"Well," said Dorothy, "as far as Betsy and Hank are concerned, I'd like to have them here in Oz. It would be such fun to have a girl playmate of my own age, you see. And Hank is such a dear little mule!"

Ozma laughed at the wistful expression in the girl's eyes, and then she drew Dorothy to her and kissed her.

"Am I not your friend and playmate?" she asked.

Dorothy flushed.

"You know how dearly I love you, Ozma!" she cried. "But you're so busy ruling all this Land of Oz that we can't always be together."

"I know, dear. My first duty is to my subjects, and I think it would be a delight to us all to have Betsy with us. There's a pretty suite of rooms just opposite your own where she can live, and I'll build a golden stall for Hank in the stable where the Sawhorse lives. Then we'll introduce the mule to the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger, and I'm sure they will soon become firm friends. But I cannot very well admit Betsy and Hank into Oz unless I also admit Shaggy's brother."

"And, unless you admit Shaggy's brother, you will keep out poor Shaggy,

whom we are all very fond of," said the Wizard.

"Well, why not admit him?" demanded Tik-Tok.

"The Land of Oz is not a refuge for all mortals in distress," explained Ozma. "I do not wish to be unkind to Shaggy Man, but his brother has no claim on me."

"The Land of Oz isn't crowded," suggested Dorothy.

"Then you advise me to admit Shaggy's brother?" inquired Ozma.

"Well, we can't afford to lose our Shaggy Man, can we?"

"No, indeed!" returned Ozma. "What do you say, Wizard?"

"I'm getting my magic ready to transport them all."

"And you, Tik-Tok?"

"Shaggy's brother is a good fellow, and we can't spare Shaggy."

"So, then; the question is settled," decided Ozma. "Perform your magic, Wizard!"

He did so, placing a silver plate upon a small standard and pouring

upon the plate a small quantity of pink powder which was contained in a crystal vial. Then he muttered a rather difficult incantation which the sorceress Glinda the Good had taught him, and it all ended in a puff of perfumed smoke from the silver plate. This smoke was so pungent that it made both Ozma and Dorothy rub their eyes for a moment.

"You must pardon these disagreeable fumes," said the Wizard. "I assure you the smoke is a very necessary part of my wizardry."

"Look!" cried Dorothy, pointing to the Magic Picture; "they're gone! All of them are gone."

Indeed, the picture now showed the same rocky landscape as before, but the three people and the mule had disappeared from it.

"They are gone," said the Wizard, polishing the silver plate and wrapping it in a fine cloth, "because they are here."

At that moment Jellia Jamb entered the room.

"Your Highness," she said to Ozma, "the Shaggy Man and another man are in the waiting room and ask to pay their respects to you. Shaggy is crying like a baby, but he says they are tears of joy."

"Send them here at once, Jellia!" commanded Ozma.

"Also," continued the maid, "a girl and a small-sized mule have mysteriously arrived, but they don't seem to know where they are or how they came here. Shall I send them here, too?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Dorothy, eagerly jumping up from her chair; "I'll go to meet Betsy myself, for she'll feel awful strange in this big palace."

And she ran down the stairs two at a time to greet her new friend, Betsy Bobbin.