

CHAPTER 18 - MAYRE, QUEEN OF THE PINK COUNTRY

Polychrome now dismissed all but Button-Bright, Cap'n Bill, Rosalie the Witch and the new Queen of the Pinkies. Tourmaline hastened away to her father's house to put on a beautiful gown all covered with flounces and ribbons, for she was glad to be relieved of the duties of the Queen and was eager to be gaily dressed and one of the people again.

"I s'pose," said Trot, "I'll have to put on one of Tourmaline's common pink dresses."

"Yes," replied Polychrome, "you must follow the customs of the country, absurd though they may be. In the little sleeping chamber adjoining this room you will find plenty of gowns poor enough for the Queen to wear. Shall I assist you to put one on?"

"No," answered Trot, "I guess I can manage it alone."

When she withdrew to the little chamber, the Rainbow's Daughter began conversing with the Witch, whom she urged to stay with the new queen and protect her as long as she ruled the Pink Country. Rosalie, who longed to please the powerful Polychrome, whose fairy powers as Daughters of the Rainbow were far superior to her own witchcraft, promised faithfully to devote herself to Queen Mayre as long as she might need her services.

By the time Trot was dressed in pink and had returned to the room, there was an excited and clamorous crowd assembled in the court, and Polychrome took the little girl's hand and led her out to greet her new subjects. The Pinkies were much impressed by the fact that the Rainbow's Daughter was their new Queen's friend, and that Rosalie the Witch stood on Trot's left hand and treated her with humble deference. So they shouted their approval very enthusiastically and pressed forward one by one to kneel before their new Ruler and kiss her hand.

The parrot was now on Cap'n Bill's shoulder, for Trot thought a Queen ought not to carry a bird around, but the parrot did not mind the change and was as much excited as anyone in the crowd. "Oh, what bliss to kiss a miss!" he shouted as Trot held out her hand to be kissed by her subjects, and then he would scream,

"We're in the sky and flyin' high; We're goin' to live instead of die, It's time to laugh instead of cry; Oh, my! Ki-yi! Ain't this a pie?"

Cap'n Bill let the bird jabber as he pleased, for the occasion was a joyful one, and it was no wonder the parrot was excited. And while the throng shouted greetings to the Queen, suddenly the great Rainbow appeared in the sky and dropped its end right on the Court of the Statues. Polychrome stooped to kiss Trot and Button-Bright, gave Cap'n Bill a charming smile and Rosalie the Witch a friendly nod of farewell. Then she sprang lightly upon the arch of the Rainbow and was greeted by the bevy of dancing, laughing maidens who were her sisters. "I shall keep watch over you, Button-Bright," she called to the boy. "Don't despair, whatever happens, for behind the clouds is always the Rainbow!"

"Thank you, Polly," he answered, and Trot also thanked the lovely Polychrome, and so did Cap'n Bill. The parrot made quite a long speech, flying high above the arch where Polychrome stood and then back to Cap'n Bill's shoulder. Said he,

"We Pollys know our business, and we're all right! We'll take good care of Cap'n Bill and Trot and Button-Bright. You watch 'em from the Rainbow, and I'll watch day and night, And we'll call a sky policeman if trouble comes in sight!"

Suddenly, the bow lifted and carried the dancing maidens into the sky. The colors faded, the arch slowly dissolved and the heavens were clear. Trot turned to the Pinkies. "Let's have a holiday today," she said. "Have a good time and enjoy yourselves. I don't jus' know how I'm goin' to rule this country yet, but I'll think it over an' let you know." Then she went into the palace hut with Cap'n Bill and Button-Bright and Rosalie the Witch, and the people went away to enjoy themselves and talk over the surprising events of the day.

"Dear me," said Trot, throwing herself into a chair, "wasn't that a sudden change of fortune, though? That Rainbow's Daughter is a pretty good fairy. I'm glad you know her, Button-Bright."

"I was sure something would happen to save you," remarked Rosalie, "and that was why I voted to have you thrown off the edge. I wanted to discover who would come to your assistance, and I found out. Now I have made a friend of Polychrome, and that will render me more powerful as a Witch, for I can call upon her for assistance whenever I need her."

"But see here," said Cap'n Bill. "You can't afford to spend your time a-rulin' this tucked-up country, Trot."

"Why not?" asked Trot, who was pleased with her new and important position.

"It'd get pretty tiresome, mate, after you'd had a few quarrels with the Pinkies, for they expect their Queen to be as poor as poverty an' never have any fun in life."

"You wouldn't like it for long, I'm sure," added Button-Bright seriously.

Trot seemed thoughtful. "No, I don't know's I would," she admitted. "But as long as we stay here, it seems a pretty good thing to be Queen. I guess I'm a little proud of it. I wish mother could see me rulin' the Pinkies, an' Papa Griffith, too. Wouldn't they open their eyes?"

"They would, mate, but they can't see you," said Cap'n Bill. "So the question is, what's to be done?"

"We ought to get home," observed the boy. "Our folks will worry about us, and Earth's the best place to live, after all. If we could only get hold of my Magic Umbrella, we'd be all right."

"The rose is red, the violet's blue, But the umbrel's stolen by the Boolooroo!" screamed the parrot.

"That's it," said Cap'n Bill. "The Boolooroo's got the umbrel, an' that settles the question."

"Tell me," said Rosalie, "If you had your Magic Umbrella, could you fly home again in safety?"

"Of course we could," replied Button-Bright.

"And would you prefer to go home to remaining here?"

"We would indeed!"

"Then why do you not get the umbrella?"

"How?" asked Trot eagerly.

"You must go into the Blue Country and force the Boolooroo to give up your property."

"Through the Fog Bank?" asked Cap'n Bill doubtfully.

"And let the Boolooroo capture us again?" demanded Button-Bright with a shiver.

"An' have to wait on the Snubnoses instead of bein' a Queen?" said Trot.

"You must remember that conditions have changed, and you are now a powerful Ruler," replied Rosalie. "The Pinkies are really a great nation, and they are pledged to obey your commands. Why not assemble an army, march through the Fog Bank, fight and conquer the Boolooroo and recapture the Magic Umbrella?"

"Hooray!" shouted Cap'n Bill, pounding his wooden leg on the floor. "That's the proper talk! Let's do it, Queen Trot."

"It doesn't seem like a bad idea," added Button-Bright.

"Do you think the Pinkies would fight the Blueskins?" asked Trot.

"Why not?" replied the sailorman. "They have sharp sticks an' know how to use 'em, whereas the Blueskins have only them windin'-up cords with weights on the ends."

"The Blueskins are the biggest people," said the girl.

"But they're cowards, I'm sure," declared the boy.

"Anyhow," the sailor remarked, "that's our only hope of ever gett'n' home again. I'd like to try it, Trot."

"If you decide on this adventure," said Rosalie, "I believe I can be of much assistance to you."

"That'll help," asserted Cap'n Bill.

"And we've one good friend among the Blueskins," said Button-Bright. "I'm sure Ghip-Ghisizzle will side with us, and I've got the Royal Record Book, which proves that the Boolooroo has already reigned his lawful three hundred years."

"Does the book say that?" inquired Trot with interest.

"Yes, I've been reading it."

"Then Sizzle'll be the new Boolooroo," said the girl, "an' p'raps we won't have to fight, after all."

"We'd better go prepared, though," advised Cap'n Bill, "fer that awful ol' Boolooroo won't give up without a struggle. When shall we start?"

Trot hesitated, so they all looked to Rosalie for advice. "Just as soon as we can get the army together and ready," decided the Witch. "That will not take long. Perhaps two or three days."

"Good!" cried Cap'n Bill, and the parrot screamed,

"Here's a lovely how-d'y'-do-- We're going to fight the Boolooroo! We'll get the Six Snubnoses, too, And make 'em all feel mighty blue."

"Either that or the other thing," said Trot. "Anyhow, we're in for it."