

CHAPTER 19 - THE WAR OF THE PINKS AND BLUES

Much to the surprise of the Earth people, the Pinkies made no objection whatever to undertaking the adventure. Their lives were so monotonous and uninteresting that they welcomed anything in the way of excitement. This march through the unknown Fog Bank to fight the unknown Blueskins aroused them to enthusiasm, and although the result of the expedition could not be foretold and some of them were almost certain to get hurt, they did not hesitate to undertake the war.

It appeared that Coralie was Captain of the Sunset Tribe and a man named Tintint the Captain of the Sunrise Tribe. Tintint had a very pink skin and eyes so faded in their pink color that he squinted badly in order to see anything around him. He was a fat and pompous little fellow and loved to strut up and down his line of warriors twirling his long, pointed stick so that all might admire him.

By Rosalie's advice the Army of Conquest consisted of one hundred Sunsets and one hundred Sunrises. Many more were eager to go, but the Witch thought that would be enough. The warriors consisted of both men and women, equally divided, and there was no need to provide uniforms for them because their regular pink clothing was a distinctive uniform in itself. Each one bore a long, pointed stick as the main weapon and had two short, pointed sticks stuck in his belt.

While the army was getting ready, Rosalie the Witch went to the central edge of the Fog Bank and fearlessly entered it. There she called for the King of the Giant Frogs, who came at her bidding, and the two held an earnest and long talk together. Meantime, Cap'n Bill had the army assembled in the Court of the Statues, where Queen Mayre appeared and told the Pinkies that the sailorman was to be Commander in Chief of the Expedition and all must obey his commands. Then Cap'n Bill addressed the army and told them what the Fog Bank was like. He advised them all to wear their raincoats over their pretty pink clothes so they would not get wet, and he assured them that all the creatures to be met with in the Fog were perfectly harmless.

"When we come to the Blue Country, though," he added, "you're liable to be pretty busy. The Blueskins are tall an' lanky, an' ugly an' fierce, an' if they happen to capture you, you'll all be patched, which is a deep disgrace an' a uncomfortable mix-up."

"Will they throw us over the edge?" asked Captain Tintint.

"I don't think so," replied Cap'n Bill. "While I was there I never heard the edge mentioned. They're cruel enough to do that--specially the Boolooroo--but I guess they've never thought o' throwin' folks over the edge. They fight with long cords that have weights on the ends, which coil 'round you an' make you helpless in a jiffy; so whenever they throw them cords you mus' ward 'em off with your long sticks. Don't let 'em wind around your bodies, or you're done for."

He told them other things about the Blueskins, so they would not be frightened when they faced the enemy and found them so different in appearance from themselves, and also he assured them that the Pinkies were so much the braver and better armed that he had no doubt they would easily conquer.

On the third day, just at sunrise, the army moved forward to the Fog Bank, headed by Cap'n Bill, clad in an embroidered pink coat with wide, flowing pink trousers, and accompanied by Trot and Button-Bright and Rosalie the Witch, all bundled up in their pink raincoats. The parrot was there, too, as the bird refused to be left behind.

They had not advanced far into the deep fog when they were halted by a queer barrier consisting of a long line of gigantic frogs, crouching so close together that no Pinkie could squeeze between them. As the heads of the frogs were turned the other way, toward the Blue Country, the army could not at first imagine what the barrier was. But Rosalie said to them, "Our friends the frogs have agreed to help us through the Fog Bank. Climb upon their backs, as many on each frog as are able to hold on, and then we shall make the journey more quickly." Obeying this injunction, the Pinkies began climbing upon the frogs, and by crowding close together, all were able to find places. On the back of the King Frog rode Trot and her parrot, besides Rosalie, Button-Bright, Cap'n Bill and the captains of the two companies of the army.

When all were seated, clinging to one another so they would not slide off, Cap'n Bill gave the word of command and away leaped the frogs, all together. They bounded a long distance at this jump--some farther than others--and as soon as they landed they jumped again, without giving their passengers a chance to get their breaths. It was a bewildering and exciting ride, but a dozen of the huge jumps accomplished the journey, and at the edge of the Fog Bank each frog stopped so suddenly that the Pinkies went flying over their heads to tumble into the blue fields of the Blue Country, where they rolled in a

confused mass until they could recover and scramble to their feet. No one was hurt, however, and the King Frog had been wise enough to treat his passengers more gently by slowing down at the edge and allowing his riders to slip to the ground very comfortably.

Cap'n Bill at once formed his army into line of battle and had them all remove the cumbersome raincoats, which they piled in a heap at the edge of the Fog Bank. It was a splendid array of warriors, and from where they stood they could discover several Blueskins rushing in a panic toward the Blue City as fast as their long, blue legs could carry them.

"Well, they know we're here, anyhow," said Cap'n Bill, "and instead of waitin' to see what'll they do, I guess we'll jus' march on the City an' ask 'em to please surrender."