

## **CHAPTER 20 - GHIP-GHISIZZLE HAS A BAD TIME**

The Boolooroo was quite busy at the time the Pinkies invaded his country. He had discovered the loss of the Book of Records, and after being frightened 'most to death at the prospect of his fraud on the people's being made public, he decided to act boldly and hold his position as Boolooroo at any cost.

Since Ghip-Ghisizzle was to be the next Boolooroo, the king suspected him first of all, so he had the Majordomo bound with cords and brought before him, when he accused him of stealing the Book of Records. Of course, Ghip-Ghisizzle denied taking the Book, but he became almost as nervous at its loss as had the Boolooroo. He secretly believed that Button-Bright had taken the Book from the Treasure Chamber, and if this were true it might prove as great a misfortune as if the king had kept it locked up. For Button-Bright had escaped into the Fog Bank, and Ghip-Ghisizzle was afraid the boy would never again be seen in the Blue Country.

He did not tell the Boolooroo of this suspicion, because in that case the king would realize he was secure and that his deception could never be proved against him. The Majordomo simply denied taking the Record Book, and the Boolooroo did not believe he spoke truly. To prevent his rival from ever becoming the Ruler of the Blue Country, the Boolooroo determined to have him patched, but for some time he could find no other Blueskin to patch him with. No one had disobeyed a command or done anything wrong, so the king was in a quandary until he discovered that a servant named Tiggie had mixed the royal nectar for Cap'n Bill, who had been ordered to do it at the time of his capture. This was sufficient excuse for the Boolooroo, who at once had Tiggie made a prisoner and brought before him.

This servant was not so long-legged as Ghip-Ghisizzle, and his head was thicker and his nose flatter. But that pleased the Boolooroo all the more. He realized that when the great knife had sliced the prisoners in two and their halves were patched together, they would present a ridiculous sight and all the Blueskins would laugh at them and avoid them. So on the very morning that the Pinkies arrived, the Boolooroo had ordered his two prisoners brought into the room of the palace where the Great Knife stood, and his soldiers were getting ready to perform the operation of patching Ghip-Ghisizzle with Tingle when a messenger came running to say that a great army of the Pinkies had broken through the Fog Bank.

"Never mind," said the Boolooroo, "I'll attend to them in a minute. I'm busy now."

"They are marching on the City," said the frightened messenger. "If you delay, Most High and Mighty One, we shall all be captured. You'd better save your City first and do your patching afterward."

"What!" roared the Boolooroo. "Dare you dictate to me?" But he was impressed by the man's logic. After locking the prisoners, who were still bound, in the Room of the Great Knife, the Ruler hurried away to assemble his soldiers. By this time the Pinkies had advanced halfway to the walls of the City, so the first thing the Boolooroo did was to order all the gates closed and locked, and then he placed a line of soldiers on the wall to prevent any of the Pinkies from climbing over. Therefore, when Cap'n Bill's army reached the wall, he was obliged to halt his ranks until he could find a way to enter the City.

Now when the Boolooroo looked through the blue-steel bars of the main gate and saw the enemy armed with sharp-pointed sticks, he began to tremble; and when he thought how painful it would be to have his body and arms and legs prodded and pricked by such weapons, he groaned aloud and was very miserable. But the thought occurred to him that if he could avoid being caught by the Pinkies, they would be unable to harm him. So he went among his people and reminded them how horrible it would feel to be punched full of holes by the invaders and urged them to fight desperately and drive the Pinkies back into the Fog Bank.

Only a few of the Blueskins were soldiers, and these all belonged to the King's bodyguard, but the citizens realized that they must indeed fight bravely to save themselves from getting hurt, so they promised the Boolooroo to do all they could. They armed themselves with long cords having weights fastened to the ends and practiced throwing these weights in such a manner that the cords would wind around their enemies. Also, they assembled in the streets in small groups and told each other in frightened whispers that all their trouble was due to the Boolooroo's cruel treatment of the Earth people. If he had received them as friends instead of making them slaves, they would never have escaped to the Pinkies and brought an army into the Blue Country that they might be revenged. The Blueskins had not liked their Boolooroo before this, and now they began to hate him, forgetting they had also treated the strangers in a very disagreeable manner.

Meantime, the Six Snubnosed Princesses had seen from their rooms in a tower of the palace the army of the Pinkies marching upon them, and the

sight had served to excite them greatly. They had been quarreling bitterly among themselves all morning, and strangely enough this quarrel was all about which of them should marry Ghip-Ghisizzle. They knew that some day the Majordomo would become Boolooroo, and each one of the six had determined to marry him so as to be Queen and thus force her sisters to obey her commands. They paid no attention to the fact that Ghip-Ghisizzle did not want to marry any of them, for they had determined that when it was agreed who should have him, they would ask their father to force the man to marry.

While they quarreled in one room of the palace, Ghip-Ghisizzle was in danger of being patched in another room; but the Six Snubnosed Princesses did not know that. The arrival of the Pinkies gave them something new to talk about, so they hurried downstairs and along the corridors so as to gain the courtyard and take part in the exciting scenes. But as they passed the closed doors of the Room of the Great Knife, they heard a low moan and stopped to listen. The moan was repeated, and being curious, they unlocked the door--the key having been left on the outside--and entered the room.

At once, the Pinkies were forgotten, for there upon the floor, tightly bound, lay Ghip-Ghisizzle, and beside him poor Tiggie, who had uttered the moans.

The six Princesses sat down in a circle facing the captives, and Cerulia said, "Ghip, my dear, we will release you on one condition: That you choose a wife from among us and promise to marry the one selected as soon as the Pinkies are driven back into the Fog Bank."

Ghip-Ghisizzle managed to shake his head. Then he said, "Really, ladies, you must excuse me. I'd rather be patched than mismatched, as I would be with a lovely, snub-nosed wife. You are too beautiful for me; go seek your husbands elsewhere."

"Monster!" cried Indigo. "If you choose me, I'll scratch your eyes out!"

"If you choose me," said Cobalt in a rage, "I'll tear out your hair by the roots!"

"If I am to be your wife," screamed Azure, "I'll mark your obstinate face with my fingernails!"

"And I," said Turquoise passionately, "will pound your head with a broomstick!"

"I'll shake him till his teeth rattle!" shrieked Sapphire.

"The best way to manage a husband," observed Cerulia angrily, "is to pull his nose."

"Ladies," said Ghip-Ghisizzle when he had a chance to speak, "do not anticipate these pleasures, I beg of you, for I shall choose none among you for a wife."

"We'll see about that," said Indigo.

"I think you will soon change your mind," added Azure.

"I'm going to be patched to Tingle, here, as soon as the Boolooroo returns," said Ghip-Ghisizzle, "and it's against the law for a patched man to marry anyone. It's regarded as half-bigamy."

"Dear me!" cried Cerulia. "If he's patched, he never can be Boolooroo."

"Then he musn't be patched," declared Sapphire. "We must save him from that fate, girls, and force him to decide among us. Otherwise, none of us can ever be the Queen."

This being evident, they proceeded to unbind the long legs of Ghip-Ghisizzle, leaving his body and arms, however, tied fast together. Then between them they got him upon his feet and led him away, paying no attention to poor Tingle, who whined to be released so he could fight in the war. After a hurried consultation, the Six Snubnosed Princesses decided to hide the Majordomo in one of their boudoirs, so they dragged him up the stairs to their reception room and fell to quarreling as to whose boudoir should be occupied by their captive. Not being able to settle the question, they finally locked him up in a vacant room across the hall and told him he must stay there until he had decided to marry one of the Princesses and could make a choice among them.