

## CHAPTER 22 - TROT'S INVISIBLE ADVENTURE

All the Blueskins except a few soldiers had gone to bed and were sound asleep. A blue gloom hung over the city, which was scarcely relieved by a few bluish, wavering lights here and there, but Trot knew the general direction in which the palace lay, and she decided to go there first. She believed the Boolooroo would surely keep so important a prisoner as Cap'n Bill locked up in his own palace.

Once or twice the little girl lost her way, for the streets were very puzzling to one not accustomed to them, but finally she sighted the great palace and went up to the entrance. There she found a double guard posted. They were sitting on a bench outside the doorway, and both stood up as she approached.

"We thought we heard footsteps," said one.

"So did we," replied the other, "yet there is no one in sight."

Trot then saw that the guards were the two patched men, Jimfred Jonesjinks and Fredjim Jinksjones, who had been talking together quite cheerfully. It was the first time the girl had seen them together, and she marveled at the queer patching that had been so strongly united here, yet so thoroughly separated them.

"You see," remarked Jimfred as they seated themselves again upon the bench, "The Boolooroo has ordered the patching to take place tomorrow morning after breakfast. The old Earth man is to be patched to poor Tiggie instead of Ghip-Ghisizzle, who has in some way managed to escape from the Room of the Great Knife--no one knows how but Tiggie, and Tiggie won't tell."

"We're sorry for anyone who has to be patched," replied Fredjim in a reflective tone, "for although it didn't hurt us as much as we expected, it's a terrible mix-up to be in until we become used to our strange combination. You and we are about alike, now, Jimfred, although we were so different before."

"Not so," said Jimfred. "We are really more intelligent than you are, for the left side of our brain was always the keenest before we were patched."

"That may be," admitted Fredjim, "but we are much the strongest, because our right arm was by far the best before we were patched."

"We are not sure of that," responded Jimfred, "for we have a right arm, too, and it is pretty strong."

"We will test it," suggested the other, "by all pulling upon one end of this bench with our right arms. Whichever can pull the bench from the others must be the strongest."

While they were tussling at the bench, dragging it first here and then there in the trial of strength, Trot opened the door of the palace and walked in. It was pretty dark in the hall, and only a few dim blue lights showed at intervals down the long corridors. As the girl walked through these passages, she could hear snores of various degrees coming from behind some of the closed doors and knew that all the regular inmates of the place were sound asleep. So she mounted to the upper floor, and thinking she would be likely to find Cap'n Bill in the Room of the Great Knife, she went there and tried the door. It was locked, but the key had been left on the outside. She waited until the sentry who was pacing the corridor had his back toward her, and then she turned the key and slipped within, softly closing the door behind her.

It was pitch dark in the room, and Trot didn't know how to make a light. After a moment's thought she began feeling her way to the window, stumbling over objects as she went. Every time she made a noise, someone groaned, and that made the child uneasy. At last she found a window and managed to open the shutters and let the moonlight in. It wasn't a very strong moonlight, but it enabled her to examine the interior of the room. In the center stood the Great Knife, which the Boolooroo used to split people in two when he patched them, and at one side was a dark form huddled upon the floor and securely bound.

Trot hastened to this form and knelt beside it, but was disappointed to find it was only Tigger. The man stirred a little and rolled against Trot's knee, when she at once became visible to him. "Oh, it's the Earth child," said he. "Are you condemned to be patched, too, little one?"

"No," answered Trot. "Tell me where Cap'n Bill is."

"I can't," said Tigger. "The Boolooroo has hidden him until tomorrow morning, when he's to be patched to me. Ghip-Ghisizzle was to have been my mate, but Ghip escaped, being carried away by the Six Snubnosed Princesses."

"Why?" she asked.

"One of them means to marry him," explained Tigger.

"Oh, that's worse than being patched!" cried Trot.

"Much worse," said Tiggie with a groan.

But now an idea occurred to the girl. "Would you like to escape?" she asked the captive. "If I get you out of the palace, can you hide yourself so that you won't be found?"

"Certainly!" he declared. "I know a house where I can hide so snugly that all the Boolooroo's soldiers cannot find me."

"All right," said Trot. "I'll do it, for when you're gone, the Boolooroo will have no one to patch Cap'n Bill to."

"He may find someone else," suggested the prisoner.

"But it will take him time to do that, and time is all I want," answered the child. Even while she spoke, Trot was busy with the knots in the cords, and presently she had unbound Tiggie, who soon got upon his feet. "Now I'll go to one end of the passage and make a noise," said she, "and when the guard runs to see what it is, you must run the other way. Outside the palace, Jimfred and Fredjim are on guard, but if you tip over the bench they are seated on, you can easily escape them."

"I'll do that, all right," promised the delighted Tiggie. "You've made a friend of me, little girl, and if ever I can help you, I'll do it with pleasure."

Then Trot started for the door, and Tiggie could no longer see her because she was not now touching him. The man was much surprised at her disappearance, but listened carefully, and when he heard the girl make a noise at one end of the corridor, he opened the door and ran in the opposite direction as he had been told to do.

Of course, the guard could not discover what made the noise, and Trot ran little risk, as she was careful not to let him touch her. When Tiggie had escaped, the little girl wandered through the palace in search of Cap'n Bill, but soon decided such a quest in the dark was likely to fail and she must wait until morning. She was tired, too, and thought she would find a vacant room--of which there were many in the big palace--and go to sleep until daylight. She remembered there was a comfortable vacant room just opposite the suite of the Six Snubnosed Princesses, so she stole softly up to it and tried the door. It was locked, but the key was outside, as the Blueskins seldom took a door key from its place. So she turned the key, opened the door, and walked in.

Now this was the chamber in which Ghip-Ghisizzle had been confined by the Princesses, his arms being bound tight to his body, but his legs left free. The Boolooroo in his search had failed to discover what had become of Ghip Ghisizzle, but the poor man had been worried every minute for fear his retreat would be discovered or that the terrible Princesses would come for him and nag him until he went crazy. There was one window in his room, and the prisoner had managed to push open the sash with his knees. Looking out, he found that a few feet below the window was the broad wall that ran all around the palace gardens. A little way to the right the wall joined the wall of the City, being on the same level with it.

Ghip-Ghisizzle had been thinking deeply upon this discovery, and he decided that if anyone entered his room, he would get through the window, leap down upon the wall, and try in this way to escape. It would be a dangerous leap, for as his arms were bound, he might topple off the wall into the garden; but he resolved to take this chance. Therefore, when Trot rattled at the door of his room, Ghip-Ghisizzle ran and seated himself upon the window sill, dangling his long legs over the edge. When she finally opened the door, he slipped off and let himself fall to the wall, where he doubled up in a heap. The next minute, however, he had scrambled to his knees and was running swiftly along the garden wall.

Trot, finding the window open, came and looked out, and she saw the Majordomo's tall form hastening along the top of the wall. The guards saw him, too, outlined against the sky in the moonlight, and they began yelling at him to stop, but Ghip-Ghisizzle kept right on until he reached the city Wall, when he began to follow that. More guards were yelling now, running along the foot of the wall to keep the fugitive in sight, and people began to pour out of the houses and join in the chase.

Poor Ghip realized that if he kept on the wall, he would merely circle the city and finally be caught. If he leaped down into the City, he would be seized at once. Just then he came opposite the camp of the Pinkies and decided to trust himself to the mercies of his Earth friends rather than be made a prisoner by his own people, who would obey the commands of their detested but greatly feared Boolooroo. So suddenly he gave a mighty leap and came down into the field outside the city. Again he fell in a heap and rolled over and over, for it was a high wall and the jump a dangerous one; but finally he recovered and got upon his feet, delighted to find he had broken none of his bones.

Some of the Blueskins had by now opened a gate, and out rushed a crowd to capture the fugitive; but Ghip-Ghisizzle made straight for the camp of the Pinkies, and his pursuers did not dare follow him far in that direction. They soon gave up the chase and returned to the City, while the runaway Majordomo was captured by Captain Coralie and marched away to the tent of Rosalie the Witch, a prisoner of the Pinkies.