

CHAPTER 28 - THE ELEPHANT'S HEAD COMES TO LIFE

When they reached the edge of the Fog Bank, the Pinkies all halted to put on their raincoats, and Button-Bright put up his umbrella and held it over himself and Trot. Then, when everybody was ready, they entered the Fog and Rosalie the Witch made a signal to call the Frog King and his subjects to aid them as they had done before.

Pretty soon the great frogs appeared, a long line of them facing Trot and her Pink Army and sitting upon their haunches close together.

"Turn around so we can get upon your backs," said Rosalie.

"Not yet," answered the Frog King in a gruff, deep voice. "You must first take that insulting umbrella out of my dominions."

"Why, what is there about my umbrella that seems insulting?" asked Button-Bright in surprise.

"It is an intimation that you don't like our glorious climate and object to our delightful fog and are trying to ward off its soulful, clinging kisses," replied the Frog King in an agitated voice. "There has never been an umbrella in my kingdom before, and I'll not allow one in it now. Take it away at once!"

"But we can't," explained Trot. "We've got to take the umbrella with us to the Pink Country. We'll put it down if you like, an' cross the bank in this drizzle--which may be clingin' an' soulful, but is too wet to be comfort'ble. But the umbrella's got to go with us."

"It can't go another inch," cried the obstinate frog with an angry croak, "nor shall any of your people advance another step while that insulting umbrella is with you."

Trot turned to Rosalie. "What shall we do?" she asked.

"I really do not know," replied the Witch, greatly perplexed.

"Can't you MAKE the frogs let us through?" inquired the boy.

"No, I have no power over the frogs," Rosalie answered. "They carried us before as a favor, but if the king now insists that we cannot pass with the umbrella, we must go back to the Blue Country or leave your umbrella behind us."

"We won't do that!" said Button-Bright indignantly. "Can't we fight the frogs?"

"Fight!" cried Trot. "Why, see how big they are. They could eat up our whole army if they wanted to."

But just then, while they stood dismayed at this unfortunate position, a queer thing happened. The umbrella in Button-Bright's hand began to tremble and shake. He looked down at the handle and saw that the red eyes of the carved elephant's head were rolling fiercely and sending out red sparks of anger in all directions. The trunk swayed from side to side, and the entire head began to swell and grow larger.

In his fright, the boy sprang backward a step and dropped the umbrella to the ground, and as he did so, it took the form of a complete elephant, growing rapidly to a monstrous size. Then, flapping its ears and wagging its tail--which was merely the covered frame of the umbrella--the huge elephant lifted its trunk and charged the line of astonished frogs.

In a twinkling the frogs all turned and made the longest leaps their powerful legs enabled them to. The King jumped first of all, and in a panic of fear the others followed his example. They were out of sight in an instant, and then the elephant turned its head and looked at Button-Bright and at once trotted into the depths of the fog.

"He wants us to follow," said the boy, gasping in amazement at this wonderful transformation. So immediately they began marching through the fog behind the elephant, and as the great beast advanced the frogs scrambled out of his way and hid themselves in the moist banks until he had passed them by.

Cap'n Bill had to mind his wooden leg carefully, and the old sailor was so excited that he mumbled queer sentences about "Araby Ann Knights" and "ding-donged magic" and the "fool foolishness of fussin' with witches an' sich," until Trot wondered whether her old friend had gone crazy or was only badly scared.

It was a long journey, and all the Pinkies were dripping water from their raincoats, and their fat little legs were tired and aching when the pink glow showing through the fog at last announced that they were nearing the Pink Country.

At the very edge of the Fog Bank the elephant halted, winked at Button-Bright, lowered its head and began to shrink in size and dwindle away. By the time the boy came up to it, closely followed by Trot and Cap'n Bill, the thing

was only the well-known Magic Umbrella, with the carved elephant's head for a handle, and it lay motionless upon the ground. Button-Bright picked it up, and as he examined it he thought the tiny eyes still twinkled a little, as if with triumph and pride.

Trot drew a long breath.

"That was SOME magic, I guess!" she exclaimed. "Don't you think so, Rosalie?"

"It was the most wonderful thing I ever saw," admitted the Witch. "The fairies who control Button-Bright's umbrella must be very powerful indeed!"