

## CHAPTER 20 - MORE SURPRISES

All that first day after the union of the two parties, our friends marched steadily toward the wicker castle of Ugu the Shoemaker. When night came, they camped in a little grove and passed a pleasant evening together, although some of them were worried because Button-Bright was still lost.

"Perhaps," said Toto as the animals lay grouped together for the night, "this Shoemaker who stole my growl and who stole Ozma has also stolen Button-Bright."

"How do you know that the Shoemaker stole your growl?" demanded the Woozy.

"He has stolen about everything else of value in Oz, hasn't he?" replied the dog.

"He has stolen everything he wants, perhaps," agreed the Lion, "but what could anyone want with your growl?"

"Well," said the dog, wagging his tail slowly, "my recollection is that it was a wonderful growl, soft and low and--and--"

"And ragged at the edges," said the Sawhorse.

"So," continued Toto, "if that magician hadn't any growl of his own, he might have wanted mine and stolen it."

"And if he has, he will soon wish he hadn't," remarked the Mule. "Also, if he has stolen Button-Bright, he will be sorry."

"Don't you like Button-Bright, then?" asked the Lion in surprise.

"It isn't a question of liking him," replied the Mule. "It's a question of watching him and looking after him. Any boy who causes his friends so much worry isn't worth having around. I never get lost."

"If you did," said Toto, "no one would worry a bit. I think Button-Bright is a very lucky boy because he always gets found."

"See here," said the Lion, "this chatter is keeping us all awake, and tomorrow is likely to be a busy day. Go to sleep and forget your quarrels."

"Friend Lion," retorted the dog, "if I hadn't lost my growl, you would hear it now. I have as much right to talk as you have to sleep."

The Lion sighed.

"If only you had lost your voice when you lost your growl," said he, "you would be a more agreeable companion."

But they quieted down after that, and soon the entire camp was wrapped in slumber. Next morning they made an early start, but had hardly proceeded on their way an hour when, on climbing a slight elevation, they beheld in the distance a low mountain on top of which stood Ugu's wicker castle. It was a good-sized building and rather pretty because the sides, roofs and domes were all of wicker, closely woven as it is in fine baskets.

"I wonder if it is strong?" said Dorothy musingly as she eyed the queer castle.

"I suppose it is, since a magician built it," answered the Wizard. "With magic to protect it, even a paper castle might be as strong as if made of stone. This Ugu must be a man of ideas, because he does things in a different way from other people."

"Yes. No one else would steal our dear Ozma," sighed tiny Trot.

"I wonder if Ozma is there?" said Betsy, indicating the castle with a nod of her head.

"Where else could she be?" asked Scraps.

"Suppose we ask the Pink Bear," suggested Dorothy.

That seemed a good idea, so they halted the procession, and the Bear King held the little Pink Bear on his lap and turned the crank in its side and asked, "Where is Ozma of Oz?"

And the little Pink Bear answered, "She is in a hole in the ground a half mile away at your left."

"Good gracious!" cried Dorothy.

"Then she is not in Ugu's castle at all."

"It is lucky we asked that question," said the Wizard, "for if we can find Ozma and rescue her, there will be no need for us to fight that wicked and dangerous magician."

"Indeed!" said Cayke. "Then what about my dishpan?"

The Wizard looked puzzled at her tone of remonstrance, so she added, "Didn't you people from the Emerald City promise that we would all stick together, and that you would help me to get my dishpan if I would help you to get your Ozma? And didn't I bring to you the little Pink Bear, which has told you where Ozma is hidden?"

"She's right," said Dorothy to the Wizard.

"We must do as we agreed."

"Well, first of all, let us go and rescue Ozma," proposed the Wizard. "Then our beloved Ruler may be able to advise us how to conquer Ugu the Shoemaker." So they turned to the left and marched for half a mile until they came to a small but deep hole in the ground. At once, all rushed to the brim to peer into the hole, but instead of finding there Princess Ozma of Oz, all that they saw was Button-Bright, who was lying asleep on the bottom.

Their cries soon wakened the boy, who sat up and rubbed his eyes. When he recognized his friends, he smiled sweetly, saying, "Found again!"

"Where is Ozma?" inquired Dorothy anxiously.

"I don't know," answered Button-Bright from the depths of the hole. "I got lost yesterday, as you may remember, and in the night while I was wandering around in the moonlight trying to find my way back to you, I suddenly fell into this hole."

"And wasn't Ozma in it then?"

"There was no one in it but me, and I was sorry it wasn't entirely empty. The sides are so steep I can't climb out, so there was nothing to be done but sleep until someone found me. Thank you for coming. If you'll please let down a rope, I'll empty this hole in a hurry."

"How strange!" said Dorothy, greatly disappointed.

"It's evident the Pink Bear didn't tell the truth."

"He never makes a mistake," declared the Lavender Bear King in a tone that showed his feelings were hurt. And then he turned the crank of the little Pink Bear again and asked, "Is this the hole that Ozma of Oz is in?"

"Yes," answered the Pink Bear.

"That settles it," said the King positively. "Your Ozma is in this hole in the ground."

"Don't be silly," returned Dorothy impatiently. "Even your beady eyes can see there is no one in the hole but Button-Bright."

"Perhaps Button-Bright is Ozma," suggested the King.

"And perhaps he isn't! Ozma is a girl, and Button-Bright is a boy."

"Your Pink Bear must be out of order," said the Wizard, "for, this time at least, his machinery has caused him to make an untrue statement."

The Bear King was so angry at this remark that he turned away, holding the Pink Bear in his paws, and refused to discuss the matter in any further way.

"At any rate," said the Frogman, "the Pink Bear has led us to your boy friend and so enabled you to rescue him."

Scraps was leaning so far over the hole trying to find Ozma in it that suddenly she lost her balance and pitched in head foremost. She fell upon Button-Bright and tumbled him over, but he was not hurt by her soft, stuffed body and only laughed at the mishap. The Wizard buckled some straps together and let one end of them down into the hole, and soon both Scraps and the boy had climbed up and were standing safely beside the others. They looked once more for Ozma, but the hole was now absolutely vacant. It was a round hole, so from the top they could plainly see every part of it. Before they left the place, Dorothy went to the Bear King and said, "I'm sorry we couldn't believe what the little Pink Bear said, 'cause we don't want to make you feel bad by doubting him. There must be a mistake, somewhere, and we prob'ly don't understand just what the little Pink Bear said. Will you let me ask him one more question?"

The Lavender Bear King was a good-natured bear, considering how he was made and stuffed and jointed, so he accepted Dorothy's apology and turned the crank and allowed the little girl to question his wee Pink Bear.

"Is Ozma REALLY in this hole?" asked Dorothy.

"No," said the little Pink Bear.

This surprised everybody. Even the Bear King was now puzzled by the contradictory statements of his oracle.

"Where IS she?" asked the King.

"Here, among you," answered the little Pink Bear.

"Well," said Dorothy, "this beats me entirely! I guess the little Pink Bear has gone crazy."

"Perhaps," called Scraps, who was rapidly turning "cartwheels" all around the perplexed group, "Ozma is invisible."

"Of course!" cried Betsy. "That would account for it."

"Well, I've noticed that people can speak, even when they've been made invisible," said the Wizard. And then he looked all around him and said in a solemn voice, "Ozma, are you here?"

There was no reply. Dorothy asked the question, too, and so did Button-Bright and Trot and Betsy, but none received any reply at all.

"It's strange, it's terrible strange!" muttered Cayke the Cookie Cook. "I was sure that the little Pink Bear always tells the truth."

"I still believe in his honesty," said the Frogman, and this tribute so pleased the Bear King that he gave these last speakers grateful looks, but still gazed sourly on the others.

"Come to think of it," remarked the Wizard, "Ozma couldn't be invisible, for she is a fairy, and fairies cannot be made invisible against their will. Of course, she could be imprisoned by the magician or enchanted or transformed, in spite of her fairy powers, but Ugu could not render her invisible by any magic at his command."

"I wonder if she's been transformed into Button-Bright?" said Dorothy nervously. Then she looked steadily at the boy and asked, "Are you Ozma? Tell me truly!"

Button-Bright laughed.

"You're getting rattled, Dorothy," he replied. "Nothing ever enchants ME. If I were Ozma, do you think I'd have tumbled into that hole?"

"Anyhow," said the Wizard, "Ozma would never try to deceive her friends or prevent them from recognizing her in whatever form she happened to be. The puzzle is still a puzzle, so let us go on to the wicker castle and question the

magician himself. Since it was he who stole our Ozma, Ugu is the one who must tell us where to find her."