

With a cry of delight, Dorothy rushed forward and embraced her. Scraps turned gleeful flipflops all around the room. Button-Bright gave a low whistle of astonishment. The Frogman took off his tall hat and bowed low before the beautiful girl who had been freed from her enchantment in so startling a manner. For a time, no sound was heard beyond the low murmur of delight that came from the amazed group, but presently the growl of the big Lavender Bear grew louder, and he said in a tone of triumph, "He never makes a mistake!"

## **CHAPTER 25 - OZMA OF OZ**

"It's funny," said Toto, standing before his friend the Lion and wagging his tail, "but I've found my growl at last! I am positive now that it was the cruel magician who stole it."

"Let's hear your growl," requested the Lion.

"G-r-r-r-r-r!" said Toto.

"That is fine," declared the big beast. "It isn't as loud or as deep as the growl of the big Lavender Bear, but it is a very respectable growl for a small dog. Where did you find it, Toto?"

"I was smelling in the corner yonder," said Toto, "when suddenly a mouse ran out--and I growled."

The others were all busy congratulating Ozma, who was very happy at being released from the confinement of the golden peach pit, where the magician had placed her with the notion that she never could be found or liberated.

"And only to think," cried Dorothy, "that Button-Bright has been carrying you in his pocket all this time, and we never knew it!"

"The little Pink Bear told you," said the Bear King, "but you wouldn't believe him."

"Never mind, my dears," said Ozma graciously, "all is well that ends well, and you couldn't be expected to know I was inside the peach pit. Indeed, I feared I would remain a captive much longer than I did, for Ugu is a bold and clever magician, and he had hidden me very securely."

"You were in a fine peach," said Button-Bright, "the best I ever ate."

"The magician was foolish to make the peach so tempting," remarked the Wizard, "but Ozma would lend beauty to any transformation."

"How did you manage to conquer Ugu the Shoemaker?" inquired the girl Ruler of Oz.

Dorothy started to tell the story, and Trot helped her, and Button-Bright wanted to relate it in his own way, and the Wizard tried to make it clear to Ozma, and Betsy had to remind them of important things they left out, and all together there was such a chatter that it was a wonder that Ozma understood any of it. But she listened patiently, with a smile on her lovely face at their eagerness, and presently had gleaned all the details of their adventures.

Ozma thanked the Frogman very earnestly for his assistance, and she advised Cayke the Cookie Cook to dry her weeping eyes, for she promised to take her to the Emerald City and see that her cherished dishpan was restored to her. Then the beautiful Ruler took a chain of emeralds from around her own neck and placed it around the neck of the little Pink Bear.

"Your wise answers to the questions of my friends," said she, "helped them to rescue me. Therefore I am deeply grateful to you and to your noble King."

The bead eyes of the little Pink Bear stared unresponsive to this praise until the Big Lavender Bear turned the crank in its side, when it said in its squeaky voice, "I thank Your Majesty."

"For my part," returned the Bear King, "I realize that you were well worth saving, Miss Ozma, and so I am much pleased that we could be of service to you. By means of my Magic Wand I have been creating exact images of your Emerald City and your Royal Palace, and I must confess that they are more attractive than any places I have ever seen--not excepting Bear Center."

"I would like to entertain you in my palace," returned Ozma sweetly, "and you are welcome to return with me and to make me a long visit, if your bear subjects can spare you from your own kingdom."

"As for that," answered the King, "my kingdom causes me little worry, and I often find it somewhat tame and uninteresting. Therefore I am glad to accept your kind invitation. Corporal Waddle may be trusted to care for my bears in my absence."

"And you'll bring the little Pink Bear?" asked Dorothy eagerly.

"Of course, my dear. I would not willingly part with him."

They remained in the wicker castle for three days, carefully packing all the magical things that had been stolen by Ugu and also taking whatever in the way of magic the shoemaker had inherited from his ancestors. "For," said Ozma, "I have forbidden any of my subjects except Glinda the Good and the Wizard of Oz to practice magical arts, because they cannot be trusted to do good and not harm. Therefore Ugu must never again be permitted to work magic of any sort."

"Well," remarked Dorothy cheerfully, "a dove can't do much in the way of magic, anyhow, and I'm going to keep Ugu in the form of a dove until he reforms and becomes a good and honest shoemaker."

When everything was packed and loaded on the backs of the animals, they set out for the river, taking a more direct route than that by which Cayke and the Frogman had come. In this way they avoided the Cities of Thi and Herku and Bear Center and after a pleasant journey reached the Winkie River and found a jolly ferryman who had a fine, big boat and was willing to carry the entire party by water to a place quite near to the Emerald City.

The river had many windings and many branches, and the journey did not end in a day, but finally the boat floated into a pretty lake which was but a short distance from Ozma's home. Here the jolly ferryman was rewarded for his labors, and then the entire party set out in a grand procession to march to the Emerald City. News that the Royal Ozma had been found spread quickly throughout the neighborhood, and both sides of the road soon became lined with loyal subjects of the beautiful and beloved Ruler. Therefore Ozma's ears heard little but cheers, and her eyes beheld little else than waving handkerchiefs and banners during all the triumphal march from the lake to the city's gates.

And there she met a still greater concourse, for all the inhabitants of the Emerald City turned out to welcome her return, and all the houses were decorated with flags and bunting, and never before were the people so joyous and happy as at this moment when they welcomed home their girl Ruler. For she had been lost and was now found again, and surely that was cause for rejoicing. Glinda was at the royal palace to meet the returning party, and the good Sorceress was indeed glad to have her Great Book of Records returned to her, as well as all the precious collection of magic instruments and elixirs and chemicals that had been stolen from her castle. Cap'n Bill and the Wizard at once hung the Magic Picture upon the wall of Ozma's boudoir, and the Wizard

was so light-hearted that he did several tricks with the tools in his black bag to amuse his companions and prove that once again he was a powerful wizard.

For a whole week there was feasting and merriment and all sorts of joyous festivities at the palace in honor of Ozma's safe return. The Lavender Bear and the little Pink Bear received much attention and were honored by all, much to the Bear King's satisfaction. The Frogman speedily became a favorite at the Emerald City, and the Shaggy Man and Tik-Tok and Jack Pumpkinhead, who had now returned from their search, were very polite to the big frog and made him feel quite at home. Even the Cookie Cook, because she was quite a stranger and Ozma's guest, was shown as much deference as if she had been a queen.

"All the same, Your Majesty," said Cayke to Ozma, day after day with tiresome repetition, "I hope you will soon find my jeweled dishpan, for never can I be quite happy without it."