

## Chapter Six - Flathead Mountain

When they saw that the intruders on their mountain were only two little girls, the Flatheads grunted with satisfaction and drew back, permitting them to see what the mountain top looked like. It was shaped like a saucer, so that the houses and other buildings--all made of rocks--could not be seen over the edge by anyone standing in the plain below.

But now a big fat Flathead stood before the girls and in a gruff voice demanded:

"What are you doing here? Have the Skeezers sent you to spy upon us?"

"I am Princess Ozma, Ruler of all the Land of Oz."

"Well, I've never heard of the Land of Oz, so you may be what you claim," returned the Flathead.

"This is the Land of Oz--part of it, anyway," exclaimed Dorothy. "So Princess Ozma rules you Flathead people, as well as all the other people in Oz."

The man laughed, and all the others who stood around laughed, too. Some one in the crowd called:

"She'd better not tell the Supreme Dictator about ruling the Flatheads. Eh, friends?"

"No, indeed!" they all answered in positive tones.

"Who is your Supreme Dictator?" answered Ozma.

"I think I'll let him tell you that himself," answered the man who had first spoken. "You have broken our laws by coming here; and whoever you are the Supreme Dictator must fix your punishment. Come along with me."

He started down a path and Ozma and Dorothy followed him without protest, as they wanted to see the most important person in this queer country. The houses they passed seemed pleasant enough and each had a little yard in which were flowers and vegetables. Walls of rock separated the dwellings, and all the paths were paved with smooth slabs of rock. This seemed their only building material and they utilized it cleverly for every purpose.

Directly in the center of the great saucer stood a larger building which the Flathead informed the girls was the palace of the Supreme Dictator. He led them through an entrance hall into a big reception room, where they sat

upon stone benches and awaited the coming of the Dictator. Pretty soon he entered from another room--a rather lean and rather old Flathead, dressed much like the others of this strange race, and only distinguished from them by the sly and cunning expression of his face. He kept his eyes half closed and looked through the slits of them at Ozma and Dorothy, who rose to receive him.

"Are you the Supreme Dictator of the Flatheads?" inquired Ozma.

"Yes, that's me," he said, rubbing his hands slowly together. "My word is law. I'm the head of the Flatheads on this flat headland."

"I am Princess Ozma of Oz, and I have come from the Emerald City to--"

"Stop a minute," interrupted the Dictator, and turned to the man who had brought the girls there. "Go away, Dictator Felo Flathead!" he commanded.

"Return to your duty and guard the Stairway. I will look after these strangers." The man bowed and departed, and Dorothy asked wonderingly:

"Is he a Dictator, too?"

"Of course," was the answer. "Everybody here is a dictator of something or other. They're all office holders. That's what keeps them contented. But I'm the Supreme Dictator of all, and I'm elected once a year. This is a democracy, you know, where the people are allowed to vote for their rulers. A good many others would like to be Supreme Dictator, but as I made a law that I am always to count the votes myself, I am always elected."

"What is your name?" asked Ozma.

"I am called the Su-dic, which is short for Supreme Dictator. I sent that man away because the moment you mentioned Ozma of Oz, and the Emerald City, I knew who you are. I suppose I'm the only Flathead that ever heard of you, but that's because I have more brains than the rest."

Dorothy was staring hard at the Su-dic.

"I don't see how you can have any brains at all," she remarked, "because the part of your head is gone where brains are kept."

"I don't blame you for thinking that," he said. "Once the Flatheads had no brains because, as you say, there is no upper part to their heads, to hold brains. But long, long ago a band of fairies flew over this country and made it all a fairyland, and when they came to the Flatheads the fairies were sorry to find them all very stupid and quite unable to think. So, as there was no good place in their bodies in which to put brains the Fairy Queen gave each one of us a nice can of brains to carry in his pocket and that made us just

as intelligent as other people. See," he continued, "here is one of the cans of brains the fairies gave us." He took from a pocket a bright tin can having a pretty red label on it which said: "Concentrated Brains, Extra Quality."

"And does every Flathead have the same kind of brains?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes, they're all alike. Here's another can." From another pocket he produced a second can of brains.

"Did the fairies give you a double supply?" inquired Dorothy.

"No, but one of the Flatheads thought he wanted to be the Su-dic and tried to get my people to rebel against me, so I punished him by taking away his brains. One day my wife scolded me severely, so I took away her can of brains. She didn't like that and went out and robbed several women of their brains. Then I made a law that if anyone stole another's brains, or even tried to borrow them, he would forfeit his own brains to the Su-dic. So each one is content with his own canned brains and my wife and I are the only ones on the mountain with more than one can. I have three cans and that makes me very clever--so clever that I'm a good Sorcerer, if I do say it myself. My poor wife had four cans of brains and became a remarkable witch, but alas! that was before those terrible enemies, the Skeezers, transformed her into a Golden Pig."

"Good gracious!" cried Dorothy; "is your wife really a Golden Pig?"

"She is. The Skeezers did it and so I have declared war on them. In revenge for making my wife a Pig I intend to ruin their Magic Island and make the Skeezers the slaves of the Flatheads!"

The Su-dic was very angry now; his eyes flashed and his face took on a wicked and fierce expression. But Ozma said to him, very sweetly and in a friendly voice:

"I am sorry to hear this. Will you please tell me more about your troubles with the Skeezers? Then perhaps I can help you."

She was only a girl, but there was dignity in her pose and speech which impressed the Su-dic.

"If you are really Princess Ozma of Oz," the Flathead said, "you are one of that band of fairies who, under Queen Lurline, made all Oz a Fairyland. I have heard that Lurline left one of her own fairies to rule Oz, and gave the fairy the name of Ozma."

"If you knew this why did you not come to me at the Emerald City and tender me your loyalty and obedience?" asked the Ruler of Oz.

"Well, I only learned the fact lately, and I've been too busy to leave home," he explained, looking at the floor instead of into Ozma's eyes. She knew he had spoken a falsehood, but only said:

"Why did you quarrel with the Skeezers?"

"It was this way," began the Su-dic, glad to change the subject. "We Flatheads love fish, and as we have no fish on this mountain we would sometimes go to the Lake of the Skeezers to catch fish. This made the Skeezers angry, for they declared the fish in their lake belonged to them and were under their protection and they forbade us to catch them. That was very mean and unfriendly in the Skeezers, you must admit, and when we paid no attention to their orders they set a guard on the shore of the lake to prevent our fishing.

"Now, my wife, Rora Flathead, having four cans of brains, had become a wonderful witch, and fish being brain food, she loved to eat fish better than any one of us. So she vowed she would destroy every fish in the lake, unless the Skeezers let us catch what we wanted. They defied us, so Rora prepared a kettleful of magic poison and went down to the lake one night to dump it all in the water and poison the fish. It was a clever idea, quite worthy of my dear wife, but the Skeezer Queen--a young lady named Coo-ee-oh--hid on the bank of the lake and taking Rora unawares, transformed her into a Golden Pig. The poison was spilled on the ground and wicked Queen Coo-ee-oh, not content with her cruel transformation, even took away my wife's four cans of brains, so she is now a common grunting pig without even brains enough to know her own name."

"Then," said Ozma thoughtfully, "the Queen of the Skeezers must be a Sorceress."

"Yes," said the Su-dic, "but she doesn't know much magic, after all. She is not as powerful as Rora Flathead was, nor half as powerful as I am now, as Queen Coo-ee-oh will discover when we fight our great battle and destroy her."

"The Golden Pig can't be a witch any more, of course," observed Dorothy.

"No; even had Queen Coo-ee-oh left her the four cans of brains, poor Rora, in a pig's shape, couldn't do any witchcraft. A witch has to use her fingers, and a pig has only cloven hoofs."

"It seems a sad story," was Ozma's comment, "and all the trouble arose because the Flatheads wanted fish that did not belong to them."

"As for that," said the Su-dic, again angry, "I made a law that any of my people could catch fish in the Lake of the Skeezers, whenever they wanted to. So the trouble was through the Skeezers defying my law."

"You can only make laws to govern your own people," asserted Ozma sternly. "I, alone, am empowered to make laws that must be obeyed by all the peoples of Oz."

"Pooh!" cried the Su-dic scornfully. "You can't make me obey your laws, I assure you. I know the extent of your powers, Princess Ozma of Oz, and I know that I am more powerful than you are. To prove it I shall keep you and your companion prisoners in this mountain until after we have fought and conquered the Skeezers. Then, if you promise to be good, I may let you go home again."

Dorothy was amazed by this effrontery and defiance of the beautiful girl Ruler of Oz, whom all until now had obeyed without question. But Ozma, still unruffled and dignified, looked at the Su-dic and said:

"You did not mean that. You are angry and speak unwisely, without reflection. I came here from my palace in the Emerald City to prevent war and to make peace between you and the Skeezers. I do not approve of Queen Coo-ee-oh's action in transforming your wife Rora into a pig, nor do I approve of Rora's cruel attempt to poison the fishes in the lake. No one has the right to work magic in my dominions without my consent, so the Flatheads and the Skeezers have both broken my laws--which must be obeyed."

"If you want to make peace," said the Su-dic, "make the Skeezers restore my wife to her proper form and give back her four cans of brains. Also make them agree to allow us to catch fish in their lake."

"No," returned Ozma, "I will not do that, for it would be unjust. I will have the Golden Pig again transformed into your wife Rora, and give her one can of brains, but the other three cans must be restored to those she robbed. Neither may you catch fish in the Lake of the Skeezers, for it is their lake and the fish belong to them. This arrangement is just and honorable, and you must agree to it."

"Never!" cried the Su-dic. Just then a pig came running into the room, uttering dismal grunts. It was made of solid gold, with joints at the bends of the legs and in the neck and jaws. The Golden Pig's eyes were rubies, and its teeth were polished ivory.

"There!" said the Su-dic, "gaze on the evil work of Queen Coo-ee-oh, and then say if you can prevent my making war on the Skeezers. That grunting

beast was once my wife--the most beautiful Flathead on our mountain and a skillful witch. Now look at her!"

"Fight the Skeezers, fight the Skeezers, fight the Skeezers!" grunted the Golden Pig.

"I will fight the Skeezers," exclaimed the Flathead chief, "and if a dozen Ozmas of Oz forbade me I would fight just the same."

"Not if I can prevent it!" asserted Ozma.

"You can't prevent it. But since you threaten me, I'll have you confined in the bronze prison until the war is over," said the Su-dic. He whistled and four stout Flatheads, armed with axes and spears, entered the room and saluted him. Turning to the men he said: "Take these two girls, bind them with wire ropes and cast them into the bronze prison."

The four men bowed low and one of them asked:

"Where are the two girls, most noble Su-dic?"

The Su-dic turned to where Ozma and Dorothy had stood but they had vanished!