



The Forest Monster of Oz
Evans, Robert J.

Published: 2003

Categorie(s): Fiction, Fantasy

Source: <http://gutenberg.org>

Also available on Feedbooks for Evans:

- *Abducted to Oz* (2003)
- *Dorothy's Mystical Adventures in Oz* (2003)

Also available on Feedbooks for Dulabone:

- *Abducted to Oz* (2003)

Copyright: Please read the legal notice included in this e-book and/or check the copyright status in your country.

Note: This book is brought to you by Feedbooks
<http://www.feedbooks.com>

Strictly for personal use, do not use this file for commercial purposes.

You've got to be taught to hate and fear. You've got to be taught
from year to year, It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear—
You've got to be carefully taught!

You've got to be taught to be afraid Of people whose eyes are
oddly made And people whose skin is a different shade— You've
got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught before it's too late, Before you are six or
seven or eight, To hate all the people your relatives hate— You've
got to be carefully taught!

Love is quite different. It grows by itself.

It will grow like a weed On a mountain of stones; You don't have
to feed Or put fat on its bones; It can live on a smile Or a note of a
song; It may starve for a while, But it stumbles along, Stumbles
along with its banner unfurled, The joy and the beauty, the hope
of the world.

—Oscar Hammerstein II

This book is dedicated to Lachie Dunn who first discovered the existence of Saber-Tooth Light-bulbs

Chapter 1

THE COWARDLY LION'S HEROIC DEED

In all the world, there is no country or township known that can ever compare against the beauty and magnitude of the Marvelous Land of Oz. This is not a debatable issue. The Land of Oz is not only beautiful with the glittering gemstones that are found commonplace in this remarkable fairyland, but its enchantment goes ever farther. In all the territory of Oz, there is clean, fresh air and gorgeous trees and scenery. There is peace and quiet when such is desired, and there is high adventure and excitement at other times. In Oz, no one ever grows older than he chooses, and death is practically unheard of. The country is situated in the center of a vast continent, and is surrounded by an impassable Deadly Desert.

Although the vast Deadly Desert Around Oz aptly prevents tourism from abroad, those who are fortunate enough to live on the proper side of this sandy enigma will surely testify that the land is as no other.

The country itself is divided into five distinct regions. The most important of these is the Emerald City. This famous area lies in the exact center of the oblong land, and is home to the supreme ruler over Oz. Her name is Ozma, and she is but a tiny child. Even so, no other ruler in any other country has ever been more respected, loved, or envied. To the south of Ozma's remarkable palace is the Quadling Country. This is ruled over by a powerful Witch named Glinda the Good. In the Quadling Country, red is the favored color, and most of the buildings, walls and furniture are distinctly red in hue. To the west lies the Winkie Country, which is a land where everything is bright and yellow-colored. To the north is the purple Gillikin territory, and to the east live the Munchkins. Among these little people, blue was clearly the color of preference.

It is to this easternmost region that I wish to direct your attention. It was in the blue Munchkin Country of Oz that a house happened to fall

from the sky and land with a loud crash atop a most unfortunate Wicked Witch.

Now although this particular Wicked Witch was about as repugnant as they come, and her evil doings had brought more misery to more people than can possibly be recorded in these few pages, it was still rather sad to see her wicked legacy brought to such an abrupt close. Especially as the particular house that happened to squish her was one which belonged to a tiny little girl named Dorothy Gale. To think that a mere toddler could bring an end to the story of the Wicked Witch of the East!

But the story did not exactly end there. It seems that, before such time as the old woman's liveliness was shmushed by little Dorothy's home, she had left a little souvenir to remember her by. Actually, it was quite a large souvenir!

She and her equally-vile sister Allidap, the Wicked Witch of the West, had created the souvenir to do battle with the Wonderful Wizard of Oz himself. Had it not been for the Wizard's powerful magic charms, he may well have been defeated. But thanks to his magic, the Wizard of Oz was able to thwart the attacks of the Witches and banish their souvenir to a forest that lay in the southern land of the Quadlings. But fearing the Witches may try to attack him again, the Wizard hid himself away in the glorious Emerald City and became a hermit.

Then, one day, Dorothy's house came down and whumped out the Wicked Witch of the East. This, needless to say, was not a healthy situation for the Wicked Witch. Little Dorothy was advised in the Munchkin Country to head for the central city and seek out the reclusive old Wizard, being told that he alone could help her to get home to Kansas.

It was a long and difficult journey, but the child was equal to the challenge. Along the way, she chanced to meet up with the Cowardly Lion. He was a formerly respected leader of the Animal Kingdom, but this particular lion had fallen into disgrace due to his outlandishly unking-like cowardice. He and the little girl became fast friends, and they journeyed together in search of Oz and, later on, Glinda the Good. It was on their journey to locate Glinda the Good that they happened to stray into the very forest where the Witches' souvenir was staying. As they walked through the vast forest, a large and tawny tiger approached the Cowardly Lion and bowed subjectively before him.

"Welcome, O King of Beasts!" quoth the tiger. "You have come in good time to fight our enemy and bring peace to all the animals of the forest once more."

"What is your trouble?" asked the Cowardly Lion in a quiet voice.

"We are all threatened," answered the tiger, "by a fierce enemy which has lately come into this forest. It is a most tremendous Monster, like a great spider, with a body as big as an elephant and legs as long as a tree trunk. It has eight of these long legs, and as the Monster crawls through the forest he seizes an animal with a leg and drags it to his mouth, where he eats it as a spider does a fly. Not one of us is safe while this fierce creature is alive, and we had called a meeting to decide how to take care of ourselves when you came among us."

The Cowardly Lion thought over the situation carefully.

"Are there any other lions in this forest?" he enquired.

"No; there were some, but the Monster has eaten them all. And, besides, they were none of them nearly so large and brave as you."

The Lion got an idea that he hoped would help him overcome his disgrace.

"If I put an end to your enemy," he began, "will you bow down to me and obey me as King of the Forest?"

"We will do that gladly," returned the big tiger. The rest of the forest animals voiced assent.

"Where is this great spider of yours now?" asked the Cowardly Lion bravely.

"Yonder," said the tiger, indicating with a tawny paw, "among the oak trees."

The Cowardly Lion overcame his fear and ignored the trepidation within his heart. He came upon the Forest Monster shortly thereafter. Even though it was sound asleep, it was the most ghastly sight that the Cowardly Lion had ever laid eyes on. It was huge, black and furry. It was filthy, too. Its putrid smell had the Lion reeling in spite of himself. But he pressed onward. The snores of the ugly Monster revealed its razor-sharp fangs which measured in at least a foot long. Its powerful legs were as muscular as those of a Hercules and were as big around as a house and as long as the trunk of a tree. The claws on the end of its eight enormous legs were curved and as sharp as scimitars. It was quite the sort of thing that nightmares are made of.

But the Cowardly Lion noticed that the Forest Monster had one weakness. He was observant enough to notice that, though the spider was so much larger than any other spider he had ever seen, its neck was as slender as a wasp's waist. Given this obvious oversight on the part of the Wicked Witches who had designed him, the Forest Monster suddenly seemed less Monstrous to the Cowardly Lion. With a leap and a single

blow of his mighty paw, he knocked the Forest Monster's head clean off! He then watched the writhing body until its legs stopped wiggling and he knew that it was quite dead.

Chapter 2

ELEPHANT'S DAY

"Elephant?" asked Tweaty, a yellow canary who was looking up at the large gray beast.

"Yes?" asked the elephant, who was drinking a tall glass of chocolate milk with his trunk.

"I was just thinking about the new Queen of Oz," said the bird solemnly. "Do you think she'll last? I mean, I really thought that the Wonderful Wizard of Oz himself would rule over the Land forever. Then I placed my confidence in His Majesty the Scarecrow. Now, out of the blue, we've got this little girl who is probably younger than most eggs, and we are supposed to give her our neverending support?"

"Why in the world not?" the pachyderm drawled as he indolently stretched himself. "Nibbles and I agree that, though she is very young, Princess Ozma shows a lot of promise as Oz's new leader. Give the child a chance. She's only been a Queen for a week or so!"

"Absolutely, Tweaty!" Nibbles agreed. "And so many rulers have been youthful. Remember the old story about King Tut? He was just a little boy."

Few persons guessed that Nibbles, Elephant and Tweaty were old friends, so unlike were they in appearance and disposition. Tweaty was delicate, clean and could sing for hours on end without repeating a tune. He took pride in his appearance and always made sure that his refulgent feathers were clean. Nibbles, on the other hand, was a mouse. He was often found digging in the trash that was sometimes left by careless campers or burrowing in other animals' nests. His fur was not what most would deem tidy, but he was amiable and companionable. Elephant, by far the largest of the three, was less colorful. He liked the other animals, and he oftentimes wanted to help the smaller creatures as best he could, but his immense size and bulk generally made him feel more like a nuisance than a help. In spite of legends that would have us all believe that elephants are afraid of mice, he found that most of his favorite playmates

were among the smaller creatures of Oz. He enjoyed fellowship with mice, as well as with rabbits and hedgehogs. He had befriended Nibbles at a young age, and it had been Nibbles who had introduced him to Tweaty.

The three friends were enjoying a relaxing afternoon in a remote region of the Munchkin Country known as the Lunechien Forest. It was a time of transition in the Land of Oz. The child Queen, Ozma of Oz, had just been named Ruler over the land. This news had met with mixed reactions. Many Ozites maintained that only the Wonderful Wizard could rule the land. Others favored the amiable Scarecrow. But all admitted that, even though a tiny little girl, Ozma was a unique leader. She had already proven that. She had not only created and brought to life a pumpkin-headed man named Jack, a wooden Sawhorse, and a wobbly monstrosity with the head of a Gump, but had also gone forth with these unlikely companions and saved the Land of Oz from a terrible fate.

"But she's a little girl!" said the bird. "She's a child! Children should be allowed to enjoy their childhoods. This kid should learn to play jacks or skip a rope. She should have some nice paper dolls to dress up. She should have nice toys. She is too young to be a Queen. Let her live a happy life for a while before you go throwing all that responsibility on her. She's only a baby, for crying out loud!"

"She is a cute little thing, though," Elephant remarked, half to himself.

"Cute?" Tweaty demanded in surprise. "That is hardly a reason to elect someone leader. Especially over such a vast country as Oz. Maybe if Oz were a little dinky insignificant country like America or Kansas, it would be okay. But Oz is so much bigger than those places. Elephant, don't you think that adorable infant deserves a childhood to enjoy before getting schlepped into Queenhood unprepared?"

Before Elephant could reply, an unexpected occurrence drove all idle thoughts from his mind. It all happened in an instant.

From the ends of the earth to the top of the sky, an unearthly roar issued forth. It was as blood-curdling as a scream, yet as sinister as a red dragon's growl.

Then, before the horrified trio, a gigantic spider loomed before them. It looked as if it were hungry, and it was so uncannily big that it could easily have devoured all three of them in an instant! It might have, too, had it not been distracted by the sight of a small yellow cat which was darting by. It took the feline in its massive claws and raised her to its mouth.

Chapter 3

THE FOREST MONSTER

Elephant stampeded frantically toward the scene, fearing for the life of the cat.

"We'll need all the help we can get," Elephant said grimly. "That animal is big! But it has poor Fisher the Cat. We can't let it eat her up!"

"Why not?" asked Nibbles.

The Elephant slung himself against the Monster's leg as hard as he could, but the creature did not even seem to notice. In a glance it was apparent to the bird and the mouse that their companion was in trouble.

"Elephant!" shouted Tweaty. "Get away from that thing! Look at its teeth! It will eat your nose off! Get your body away from it!"

[Illustration: Elephant vs. Forest Monster]

But Elephant was determined. He made a loud trumpet noise and stepped on the Monster's foot. With a howl of pain, the Forest Monster dropped the cat.

"What do you think you're doing, to try and eat Fisher up like that? A poor defenseless cat! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"I wasn't going to eat her up, you dolt!" said the Monster in a cold and scratchy voice. "I was trying to see if it was a lion. I was told by a certain squirrel that it was a lion who lopped my head off."

"But you've still got your head," Tweaty interjected.

"Yeah, *now!*" said the Monster. "But it was a pain in the neck trying to get it back! And before I could, my body began to shrink. I kept getting smaller and smaller. I felt like Alice after eating the wrong thing!"

"Holy cow!" said Nibbles. "Are you saying that you were once bigger than you are now?"

"No, actually. I found myself a way to restore my size."

"How is that?"

"I have captured a very magical insect-bug in one of my webs. Sweet little thing, too. Some people spray insects with a flit gun, but I like to eat them up. Bugs are yummy in my tummy! But my little Lovebug is

special. She doesn't go in my tummy. Instead, she gets to stay wound up in my web, only to be let free long enough to give me what I need."

"What is that?" asked Elephant with a shudder.

"The biggest and grandest thing in the universe is, of course, True Love. Even though shaped a bit like a cockroach, my Lovebug can produce the stuff inside her teeny little heart. All I have to do is chant a certain incantation and then to have her kiss me once or twice each day, and I stay as big as I like!"

"But that is terrible!" said Tweaty. "You can't abuse Love that way! Love is supposed to be beautiful and friendly and stuff like that! To cheapen this sacred gift by forcing someone into submission by magic or force is an abuse of Love, and not what the gods had in mind for us at all. If you are making this Love-insect your slave, you are abusing the whole concept and also missing the point!"

With another tremendous roar, the huge spider was gone. He obviously did not care for any more lecturing that day.

"Good riddance, I say!" spoke Nibbles. "That big old thing was ugly! And it smelled awful!"

"Where's Fisher?" asked Elephant.

"I think the thingy ate her up after all."

"I sure hope not!"

"I'm fine," came the feline meow. "Is that beast gone away yet?"

"It has," answered the pachyderm. Oddly, neither Nibbles nor Tweaty felt the slightest tinge of fear at the sight of the cat. In Oz, natural enemies oftentimes become the dearest of friends. Indeed, Oz is a truly remarkable land!

"I think I saw all nine of my lives flash before me that time!" said the cat. "What in the heck *was* that thing that had me?"

"I don't know," said Elephant. "But I hope we'll never see it again."

"But you have to rescue that poor little insect!" said an earthworm, poking her head out of the ground. "Didn't you bozos hear what that thing said about Lovebug? He's got her stuck in his sticky web, and he is treating her like a slave and he's even making her—ugh!—kiss him! How yucky can you get? You must save that poor little bug. She is a good bug. Love is always good! Please help her. Please. I can't bear to think of her in that predicament!"

"It's a stupid bug, for crying out loud!" said Tweaty. "Don't you think that we have more important things to do than to go and save a stupid bug?"

"But this is Oz, where everyone is equal," Nibbles pointed out. "Even a cat like Fisher is our friend. In this fantastic country, I'd think that even a tiny insect is not beneath our concern. I think we should save her."

"Give me a break!" Tweaty said. "I'm not about to face that big ugly Monster again for the sake of a cockroach!"

"She is not a cockroach," said the worm. "She is a kindly insect who helps people in need to feel cared about. She has great powers to do that for people. But that spider is misusing her powers and making her serve him in a most wicked capacity against her will. He is abusing her and she is probably miserable. How can you let him treat such a sweet being in such an awful manner?"

"I, for one, am willing to try to help save Lovebug," said Elephant.

"Me too," said Nibbles.

"I think... "

Before Tweaty could finish his sentence, a loud scream was heard. Hurrying toward the sound, they found Louie the Lobo with a pale expression.

"What happened?" asked Elephant.

"Something took Tiger!" he said. "I didn't see who it was, but something took him away while we were talking about the Tin Woodman. I don't know who would do such a foul thing! Tiger is my best friend! I yelled at the kidnapper, but to no avail. I have lost my best friend!" He began to cry like a kitten.

"It must have been that awful Forest Monster-Spider!" Nibbles swallowed hard. "I know it was he who did this! He is so horrific! We must get word to the new Queen. We really must!"

"I agree wholeheartedly," spoke Elephant. "We can not allow this sort of thing to happen. Do you remember the last time enslavement was happening here in our Munchkin country?"

"I do," said the mouse. "It was when that Wicked Witch had us all enslaved. Oh, she was ever so much worse than I had ever realized! I'm glad that house fell down and made her into mush."

"But we cannot count on any houses falling down on this spider man," said Tweaty with certainty. "You are quite right when you say that we should do something about it. I was being awfully selfish when I refused to do anything to help that little bug. But now my eyes are opened. To think that not even a tiger is safe in that Monster's wake! This means sure danger for birds and mice and elephants, too!"

"Then let's go and inform the new Queen straightaway!" trumpeted Elephant. "I am willing to believe that she has the power to help us if anyone does."

"But we should have something to show her to prove that we are not insane," said Nibbles. "After all, who would ever believe that such a beast could exist? It isn't natural. And besides ... "

He cut his sentence short when his eye fell upon a large marking on the ground.

"Gads!" exclaimed Elephant. "That is one of the Monster's footprints! Goodness! Just look how deep it is! That creature must weigh a million tons!"

"Yes," agreed Tweaty, flittering into the hole. "This footprint is almost as big around as a horse! And look at the size of those claws! I'll bet it could rip Elephant in two without even straining itself!"

"Let's not discuss that," shuddered the pachyderm. "But I think we should save this footprint for the Queen. Because she is a mere child, she will be most impressed by its mass. I think we should make a cast of it and carry it to the Emerald City to show her what we are up against."

Nibbles and Tweaty hurriedly went to a nearby maple tree and gnawed at its trunk for a time. With Elephant's help, they poured some maple syrupy sap into the footprint. Elephant blew on this with his strong lungs until it hardened. Then, there before the trio, was a perfect cast of the Forest Monster's footprint.

Eagerly Elephant snatched it up in his trunk and flung it onto his back.

"Let's get on our way," he said. The other two nestled upon his head and they were off to the Emerald City of Oz.

Chapter 4

AN UNLIKELY TRIO OF FRIENDS

Elephant, Tweaty and Nibbles were ready to leave, and it seemed that dozens of other forest animals were of the same mind. The ferocity of the Forest Monster had led many of the denizens of the Lunechien Forest to panic. Many of them wanted to tell the Lord of the Forest about the trouble, while others elected to go to Glinda the Good, who ruled over the neighboring Land of the Quadlings. Animals were running to and fro, and there was a mass of confusion.

"Look out!" Nibbles cried suddenly. "That Unicorn is coming right at us!"

Elephant was helpless in trying to avert the disaster. An abnormally frightened Unicorn, undoubtedly made nervous by the excitement, had lost control of her footing. She plowed into the rear of the elephant with a jolt which nearly flung the two passengers on his head into Glowing Limbo.

Retrieving his companions and determining that they were unhurt, he listened for a few moments to the oft-repeated apologies of the Unicorn and then set out again.

"I sure hope that Queen Ozma can do something about that ugly brute," said Nibbles.

"If she can't, we'll be no worse off than when we started," replied Tweaty.

The subject was dropped there. Elephant had run most rapidly and the trio was now approaching the Emerald City.

"Excuse me," said the man at the gate. "Who are you and what is your business in the Emerald City?"

"We want to see the child who has become our Queen," replied Elephant.

"On what grounds?"

"On the ground I'm walking upon now, I suppose. Is there a problem?"

"What is your business with the Queen? If you are here to make fun of her age, you are welcome to go away. Queen Ozma was sent to us by the Fairy Queen Lurline herself, and she has our respect. Even though she is a tiny child, she is not to be made sport of."

"No one is making sport of anyone," said Elephant gruffly. "Though if you don't get out of my way I may decide to use you for a football."

"That will not be necessary," said the guard. "But you will need to wear green glasses. It is a rule that was set up by the Wonderful Wizard of Oz himself. It is because of the gleaming magnitude of all the big gemstones everywhere. If you don't wear these special glasses, you might well be blinded by their brilliance. I hope you won't object to this."

"Well," said Elephant. "I fear that your glasses will not fit someone my size. Nor, for that matter, the smaller sizes of my companions."

"Jeepers," said the guard. "I hadn't thought of that. Perhaps you're right." He practically threw himself into his chestful of green glasses, but found none that would fit the animals. "I guess I'll have to make you some. This may take a while, so you'll have to find something to do in the mean."

"How about we go and talk to the Queen while you make us our glasses?" suggested Nibbles.

"A grand idea!" replied the guard. He opened the gate and the company entered.

The Emerald City of Oz is a truly remarkable place. It has had so many volumes written about it that it hardly needs a description here, but it should be noted that our trio was most impressed.

Ozma, too, was very impressive. They came upon her while she was engrossed in playing paper-dolls with another little girl on the palace steps.

"Excuse me, your Majesty," said Elephant.

The child looked up from her game and smiled at the pachyderm. "Hello," she said quietly.

"My Dear Queen," said Elephant, "I and my cohorts are from the Luncheon Forest of Oz. It is situated in the Munchkin Country, and we are proud to call ourselves your subjects."

"Thank you very much," Ozma said politely. "Do you want to play paper-dolls with us?"

"I—er, well, I suppose at some point I could be persuaded," stammered Elephant. "But I have come on very important business just now."

As the animals watched, Ozma seemed to make a complete transformation. She remained a child, but her eyes suddenly grew solemn and she raised herself from her seat on the steps. Even though very young and inexperienced, the Child Queen took on an appearance of regal splendor. It made Elephant want to bow down before her, and this he promptly did. It was fortunate that Tweaty could fly, but unfortunate that Nibbles could not. Tweaty zoomed into the air without mishap as soon as Elephant's head went down in his bow. Nibbles, however, was thrust through the air by the impact of Elephant's exuberant show of subjection. He flew toward the child and did not stop until he became caught in her pocket. Ozma, being that she was only a little girl after all, began to scream until Elephant reached into the pocket with his trunk and retrieved the rodent.

"Thank you," Ozma said, composing herself. "When I was a little boy named Tip, I'd have probably thought that very funny. But I am beginning to feel like Ozma again. This is who I am truly destined to be. Now tell me, what is the nature of your call?"

Elephant and the others quickly explained about the Forest Monster and how they feared for their lives. As they spoke, the child grew more and more solemn.

"It is hard to be a ruler over such a big land as Oz," spoke the child after she had heard the news concerning the spider creature. "But I am not willing to allow such a fiendish creature to harm any of my subjects. I do not know of your Lunechien Forest, but I will do all in my power to assist you."

Chapter 5

THE QUEEN OF OZ

The magic of Oz began with little more than a simple wish. The man who ruled at that long-forgotten time, King Ozroar, was not a very happy monarch. He ruled the beautiful land, but he had no magic with which to insure the happiness of the people. Sickening fogs would envelop the land from time to time, and the area was never very prosperous. Still, it was too beautiful to go overlooked by the fairies. These magical beings are able to see things as they should be, not only as they are. One fairy who was especially interested in the land of Oz was a leader of fairies named Lurliné.

Lurliné was no ordinary fairy ruler, though. She had especial insight into the things that made beauty what it is. It was her keen insight that once brought her to Mount Olympus. This legendary mountain has long been said to be the home of many ancient Gods. According to the Ozian storytellers, who still today will sit by your campfire and tell you a tale in exchange for a cup of tea or a morsel of food, these Immortals recognized her abilities at once, and she was admitted into their society of Godhood. As a Goddess, Lurliné was able to gain access to many things.

With the help of her fairy band, as well as the input of her sister fairy, Polychrome, Lurliné was able to give the Land of Oz the magical enchantment that made it what it is today. But she did not do the deed without a few pitfalls.

Among the things that Lurliné required to fulfill the spell's needs were Apollo's own sky chariot, the flying horses to pull it through the air, Kolé's essence of crystal, and Lillith's brazier of endless flame. At Polychrome's suggestion, she also obtained Iris' jug of rainbow.

Unfortunately, Lurliné was not always scrupulous. In this event, she elected to take the various magical requirements without the permission of the various deities. She stole into their chambers at night as they lay sleeping and took the elements she wished. She then went together with her fairy band and performed the enchantment over Oz.

She was banished from Mount Olympus as a result of her rash action. But, supposing the legend is all true, the marvelous Land of Oz remains as a glowing tribute to the powers of the Fairy Queen Lurliné. And to insure its longevity, Lurliné arranged for a fairy ruler to watch over the country she had created. Of course, the ruler would have to be a native Ozite. She would be a beautiful princess.

Princess Ozma was born several generations later unto a descendant of Ozroar and his wife Ozia, herself a descendant of fairies and daughter of Oziana. Young Ozma was prepared to take on the leadership of Oz upon reaching adulthood.

But Lurliné's plan was balked by the arrival of Oscar Zoroaster Phadrig Isaac Norman Henckle Emmanuel Ambroise Diggs. This was a mortal man from outside of the enchanted land who landed there in a balloon. It had been he who had erected the Emerald City, and he who had sold the infant Ozma into slavery at the hands of a heartless old Witch named Mombi. To hide the infant queen, Mombi had transformed her into a boy. She believed that no one would ever think to look to a little boy to find the fairy princess, so Ozma was aptly hidden away for a very long time.

But things in Oz do have a way of working out for the best. After Diggs left the country, Ozma was found and restored to her proper being. She had aged very little, being that Oz folk age only when they choose to, and little Ozma had just been given her rightful place on the royal throne. Most of this history, of course, was unknown to Elephant and his companions. They saw only the fact that she was a child. They did not know of her unique experiences at all. If they had, they'd have surely recognized that she was more aware of human needs and the differences there connected. But even to their eyes, it was clear that this child was very special. They had every hope that she would be able to do as they needed done to rid their land of the terrifying Forest Monster.

Chapter 6

THE GIANT SPIDER

Tiger growled as he watched his captor wrap him in the strong webbing. He was a fairly small tiger, but he was accustomed to being larger than any spider he had ever heard of. This spider, he felt certain, was some sort of a freak of nature. Perhaps a direct result of the humans' constant littering, or maybe a military experiment gone haywire.

"Ahh, my little pussycat," laughed the creature. "I have you now. There is no need for further struggle."

"Like I told you before," grumbled Tiger, "I am not a lion. I am a striped tiger. Can't you see that?"

"I can admit that you do not look like what I had in mind," replied the spider. "However, you are feline in nature. That is all I care about just now."

"But it wasn't me who beheaded you. I am innocent!"

"Perhaps," the spider seemed unconcerned. "Perhaps what you say is true, and then again, perhaps you're Lion to me. In any event, you are at the very least a distant cousin to that animal that lopped my head off. When he hears that you are in my clutches, he'll be here."

"But this is a small, rarely traversed forest," said the tiger. "It isn't often that news from the Lunechien Forest gets out to the rest of the country."

"Then you shall stay here as my guest," grinned the spider. "After all, the little insect has been satisfying me less lately. I had been using her sweet charity to keep myself giant-sized." He stalked over to a wall on the far side of the cave. Indicating two yellowing papers with crudely drawn human faces on them, he turned back toward his bound prisoner. "These are pictures I drew of the Great Masters. They created me, and gave me the powers I possess. When they asked me to devour their bald-headed little enemy, I was only too happy to comply. He had too much magic in him, however. I was sent away from my beloved Creators." Tiger thought that the monster was about to cry, but he went on. "I made the best of it, though. I became the leader of a lot of wild animals in an

untamed wood. Oh, they never actually called me that. But they feared me. You'd better believe it! They were scared spitless by me! Until one day, when that ... that ... that LION came along and used my head as if it were a baseball! But I'll get even now, little friend. Believe you me! I will find that lion, and I will chomp his head off! You just wait and see if I don't!" He turned to the drawing of the Witch of the East. "I will avenge myself on this lion for us both," he said, crossing himself.

"But, really," begged Tiger. "I have no argument with you. Please let me free. I will help you bag your lion-prey."

"Not a bit of that!" snarled the spider. "I have better plans for you."

"Better plans?"

"Most definitely. As I was saying, the bug's no longer sufficient for my needs. I am told that you have a powerful and courageous heart. Bold and fearless, is it not?"

"I'm afraid I don't understand your ... "

"If I use your heartfelt emotions, which seem to be, er ... well, tiger-sized by definition ... If I can do that, I can remain giant-sized for time and all eternity. I can be all-powerful! I will be the bravest arachnid on the face of the earth! And next, my little chickadee, I plan to capture some little beasts that are called Hootsey and ... Lisa, is it? Owls, I think. They are known for their wisdom and kindness to their fellow Ozites. I care nothing for their kindness, of course. My power comes from the negative uses of the senses. But I plan to make use of their immense knowledge. Oh, yes! And then, my dear little Tiger, THEN! I shall reach out to my definitive prize in all the Lunechien Forest. That big wrinkly fellow I saw not too long ago. He had a nose like a garden hose, but my little bug has unwittingly told me that he is the one to whom the forest beasts turn when they have problems. He likes to solve problems, and has a phenomenal knack for it. He is wise beyond his years, and his emotions encompass all the land! He is also one of the strongest and most bold beasts in all the Lunechien territory—even putting the tigers like you to shame! When I can capture this Elephant, I will be all-powerful! I will be almighty! I will be superhuman! Then, I shall be able to take on the beast who has come to be known as the Cowardly Lion. A most unfitting moniker, wouldn't you say, for a fellow who swiped off my head while I was asleep one day?"

"You'll never get away with this!" roared Tiger. "Elephant is too big and strong to be beaten by any spider—even one so large as you!"

"We'll see about that shortly, Shorty," replied the spider. "Now, won't we?"

THE FOREST MONSTER OF OZ

Meanwhile, word of the monster's plans for Tiger had reached Elephant and Tweaty and Nibbles via Hootsey and Lisa. The trio had been showing Ozma the cast of the giant footprint when the owls flew in with the news. Ozma was astounded that such a beast could live in her domain without her being aware of it. And indeed, the beast had kept a fairly low profile until recently. But it was quite obvious that a power struggle was now going on. The beast was gradually finding out that he could grow larger and stronger at the expense of others and would no doubt not be satisfied until he was so large and powerful that every living creature would be under his domain. Why, even Ozma herself was in danger. The owls quickly informed her that the beast's first goal was to capture Elephant in order to gain the super strength that would enable him to attack the Cowardly Lion. However, she knew he had to absorb Tiger's power and courage first before he would dream of attacking Elephant. It was quite obvious he was going to have to think fast before Tiger became a mere shell of his old self.

Hootsey and Lisa were naturally quite concerned for their own welfare. They did not want their wisdom sucked out of them by a giant spider with vampire-like tendencies. One has to live a long time and learn by trial and error before one can truly be considered wise. Of course, some people never learn. They make the same mistakes over and over. However, that is neither here nor there. The point is that Hootsey and Lisa were in as much danger as anyone and were very anxious to help in any way they could.

"If I might make a suggestion?" said Hootsey. "I recently came upon some unusual creatures that could very well be a match for the monster."

Of course, everyone was all ears, and fell silent as Hootsey began to talk.

"These creatures are very unusual in that they are technically made of glass and so would appear to be very fragile. But when they open their

mouths they are a most ferocious sight to behold. They are of a bulbous shape with very long legs that can move at the speed of light—"

At this point Nibbles intercepted Hootsey's graphic description.

"These animals sound most interesting, but they don't sound particularly ferocious—"

"Oh, wait!" responded Hootsey. "I haven't told you the best part. Their mouths are filled with razor-sharp teeth and they can rip any animal to shreds in two seconds. When a pack of them attack, the unfortunate victim never even knows what hit him. It's over that fast."

"And what might the name of these creatures be?" responded Elephant.

"Well," answered Hootsey. "Two important factors contribute to their name. One is their ability to light their bodies up at night brighter than a hundred glow worms. The second is when they open their mouths and expose those teeth you would think you were looking at a Saber-Toothed tiger. Anyone want to guess their name?"

"*Saber-Toothed Light Bulbs!*" everyone responded in unison.

They all began to feel a little better to know that perhaps the dreadful spider-creature may not be so formidable after all. It was difficult to imagine how he could possibly stand up to a ferocious pack of Saber-Toothed Light Bulbs. Of course, the next thing that must be done would be to negotiate with the Saber-Toothed Light Bulbs and see if they would be willing to take on the monster. The little group was so engrossed in mulling this over that they did not notice a new visitor in their midst. It was Tweaty who first noticed him and nudged Nibbles in the ribs. Nibbles looked up to observe the strangest-looking little chap that he had ever set eyes on. He was a sort of miniature Fred Flintstone—short and pudgy. But he had a nose to beat all noses! It wasn't that it was long or funny shaped or anything. It was just big (and I really mean BIG!). Anyway, when Tweaty poked Nibbles in the ribs, it was a pretty hard poke. And Nibbles let out quite a yell. Everyone turned to look, and saw the stranger.

"Excuse me," said the stranger. "I didn't mean to intrude. But I saw everyone here having a meeting and I didn't want to interrupt. However, since I now have your undivided attention, I feel duty-bound to convey the reason for my being here in the hopes that you will not consider it an intrusion on your privacy."

"Well, he is certainly polite," commented Hootsey. "It is my considered opinion that we should hear what he has to say."

"By all means," everyone said, nodding in unison.

"Well, my mission is really with Queen Ozma. You see, my people have encountered some border skirmishes with our neighbors to the north and we were hoping that Queen Ozma could use her good offices and apply her diplomatic powers of persuasion to encourage them to retreat back into their own territory. You see, they are very aggressive in nature; whereas we are a very passive people."

"Might I ask if they have made any formal declaration of hostilities?" asked the Queen in her best adult voice.

"Well, no. Not exactly," responded the little chap. "Perhaps the best way of clarifying the situation would be for me to read this copy of a recent speech our President gave to our parliamentary congress." With that, he pulled out a rolled-up manuscript from his coat pocket with a flourish and began to read;

"Ladies and Gentlemen: I have called this emergency session of the Five Hundredth and Eighteenth Parliamentary Congress to inform you of some very disturbing developments along our northern border. As president of the Sniffer Nation, I need not remind you of the delicate nature of our highly sensitive olfactory organs—our noses. And would you believe that our so-called friendly northern neighbors—the Stinkfoots—have recently seen fit to ignore all previous treaties and sense of common decency! They have caused great distress among our border residents by not only building new residential dwellings right smack up against the border, but have blatantly crossed the border in ever increasing numbers and brazenly thumbed their ridiculously small noses at Sniffer citizens who were unfortunate enough to cross their paths. They have also been observed taking soil samples from our rich bottom land. The reasons for this are now known to us. You will be shocked to the core when I reveal this to you in a moment. In the meantime many of our border residents have become so overwhelmed and nauseated by the smell of the Stinkfoots that they have moved lock stock and barrel to the city. I immediately dashed off a letter of protest to the Stinkfoot President, demanding an immediate withdrawal to the previously negotiated line of demarcation two miles north of the border.'

"I do not wish to alarm our citizens to the point of panic, but I shall now read to you their President's reply:

"To President Humongous Schnozzle; distinguished Members of the Five Hundredth and Eighteenth Parliamentary Congress of the Sniffer Nation; and to all of the humble citizens of your fair land.

"First, let me apologize for not entering into new negotiations regarding our present expansion. But due to a severe blight on our stinkweed

crop, which as you know is our staple diet, our people are becoming severely malnourished. I'm sure that you are all well aware that we are greatly dependent on the stinkweed plant for many purposes, the least of which is the manufacture of stinkweed pills which we all partake of religiously in order to maintain that rich aroma that permeates our bodies, but which mainly radiates from the area of our feet. As you know, our olfactory senses are virtually nonexistent, but we are aware of a slight essence of this aroma which we find most pleasing. Unfortunately for others who might stray across our borders, the smell overpowers them in seconds, rendering any potential invader helpless. Now, as a result of the factors I have just presented to you, we find your bottom land by our northern borders to be extremely rich in nutrients that the stinkweed plant needs to flourish, and preliminary experimental results indicate that stinkweed plants grown in this environment are completely immune to the blight that is wiping out our crop. Therefore, we have no option but to take as much of your land as will insure the very survival of the proud nation that we are. That is why we did not inform you formally or informally. The matter is simply not negotiable.

"Sincerely

"Stinky McFoot President (Past, Present and Future) of Stinkfootland

"P.S.—It is not our fault that the Sniffer people have such big noses that their sense of smell is ultra sensitive to our presence."

The little group had fallen silent. "You know," said Elephant to Ozma. "We are greatly sympathetic to their predicament. However, the situation with the Stinkfoots and the Sniffers is diverting us from our real problem—which is that huge, furry, ugly, filthy putrid monstrosity who calls himself a spider."

"That's very true," said Ozma. "But remember, we have to negotiate with the Saber-Toothed Light Bulbs before we can do anything. In the meantime, the President of the Sniffer Nation has asked our help and we simply cannot refuse. He and his people are in a real bind."

"I'll be in a real bind if that monster attacks me," snapped Elephant. "I'll be bound up in his giant web and devoured to death."

"Now don't you worry," Ozma replied, reaching up to pat Elephant's trunk. "We won't let anything happen to you."

Her answer must have satisfied Elephant, because he wrapped his trunk around her waist and hoisted her up to his back. Then he walked down to the stream and took a long drink. As they returned to join the group, Hootsey was clearing his throat and proceeded to speak with pure wisdom dripping from every word. "I have been thinking... "

Before he could continue, Lisa interrupted him. "I can see that you've been thinking because smoke is coming out of your ears." Of course she had a twinkle in her eyes when she said this, but Hootsey did not see the humor of it.

"Well that's very funny, Ha! Ha!" he said dryly. "I'm dying of laughter, Ho! Ho! Ho!" After he finished glaring at Lisa, he continued ... "So, anyway, as I was saying," again glaring at Lisa, "*before I was so rudely interrupted!* There is great diversity in Oz. I mean, there are so many different kinds of people, yet for the most part we all get along fairly well. Oh, we have our differences of opinion. No question about it. But we seem to resolve them without too much upheaval. Well, most of the time. Anyway, the point is—"

At that, Tweaty interrupted. "I can see immediately that you have never been to Chilepepperland."

"And where, pray tell, is Chilepepperland?" enquired Hootsey with a hint of cynicism. "And why have I never heard of it?"

"Perhaps you've never heard of it because you're too busy trying to think of wise things to say," interrupted Nibbles. "After all, you have a reputation to uphold."

Hootsey could not be sure if Nibbles was being a "smart alec" or was just paying him a complement.

"Chilepepperland is beyond the great desert," answered Tweaty, "in a very remote region which is surrounded by impenetrable terrain composed of jagged rocks. There is only one narrow passageway which twists and turns every which way through the rocks. The sides of the passageway are quite sheer. If you were looking down from above, it would just seem like a chasm because you cannot see the path at the bottom. Besides, the road disappears in places where it goes under the rocks. The entrance is completely hidden by prickly pear bushes which are plentiful in the region. That is why no one has ever heard of Chilepepperland. Because it is basically cut off from civilization."

"How did you discover it?" Elephant asked with genuine curiosity.

"Well," continued Tweaty, "I happened to be flying over the area one day and spotted a group of green chilepeppers having a picnic. They invited me to lunch and told me all about their turbulent history. It seems that Chilepepperland was first occupied by several tribes of red chilepeppers who were, for the most part, peace-loving. Oh, they had occasional small skirmishes among themselves. But they lived in relative harmony for many many years; living off the land which they treated with great reverence because it provided all their food. They also had

great respect for the animal kingdom. They were never wasteful; giving constant thanks to the great spirit who, they believed, watched over them and provided for them abundantly. They believed in sharing their bounty with one another, and this they did frequently with great ceremony. Then one fateful day, the first group of yellow chilepeppers arrived from a foreign shore. At first there was a mutual understanding between the newcomers and the indigenous people. The red chilepeppers were very helpful in assisting the newcomers to adapt to their new surroundings. In return, they were given trinkets that sparkled, such as colored glass beads, hand mirrors and such, the like of which they'd never set eyes on before. The red chilepeppers were an innocent people, really quite primitive compared to the sophisticated so-called civilized newcomers who, incidentally, were very quick to take advantage of the childlike trust the red chilepeppers displayed in their early contacts. They moved quickly to take full advantage of these simple trustful souls. And as more and more yellow chilepeppers arrived, they moved across the country taking whatever land they needed without any regard for the previous occupants. This led to much fighting and eventual total conquest of the red chilepeppers who were forced to give up their beautiful lands and moved to less desirable areas. This broke their spirit, for they were once a very proud people—roaming at will the vast prairies and forests. And to this day they remain second-class citizens, really. Never able to assimilate into the world of the yellow chilepeppers, nor ever able to return to the total freedom they once knew."

"That has to be the saddest story I've ever heard," said Elephant. "Those yellow chilepeppers are just rotten dogs! How could they treat their fellow chilepeppers that way just because they were red instead of yellow?"

"I assume that they were uncomfortable with people who they considered 'different,'" answered Ozma. "Also, they wanted the best land for themselves."

"Anyway, that's not all," continued Tweaty. "After they took those lush lands away from the rightful owners, they desecrated much of it over the years, seeing it only as something to take from and to pour harsh chemicals into for various reasons of their own. The red chilepeppers had always blessed the land, given it thanks for its bounty and replenished it when they took from it. Yet the yellow chilepeppers considered them primitive and savage. And that's still not all! The green chilepeppers went on to tell me about the treatment that *they* received at the hands of the yellow chilepeppers. It seems that they also lived in a land of their

own far away across the Nonestic Ocean. One day a group of yellow chilepeppers, who were visiting the area in their ship, came ashore and captured some of them and took them back to Chilepepperland and sold them to plantation owners in the southern part of Chilepepperland ... "

"Oh, come on!" said Nibbles, who had been very silent all this time. "You can't sell people."

"In those days you could," Tweaty responded. "At least, according to the green chilepeppers I talked to. They not only sold the people they captured as slaves, but they went back again and again to capture more green chilepeppers and sold them, too. And by the way, a lot of the green chilepeppers died in the terrible voyage en route."

"But how could the leaders of the yellow chilepeppers allow this to happen?" asked Ozma. "I would never allow even an unkind remark to pass between them if I were their leader. And I would have made the yellow chilepeppers take the green chilepeppers back to their own people immediately."

"Well, as a matter of fact," continued Tweaty, "the yellow chilepeppers' leader lived in the north, and he thought very poorly of this arrangement. A lot of other people agreed with him, and he abolished slavery forever from the land. But it caused the yellow chilepeppers to fight among themselves and, to this day, some yellow chilepeppers still do not consider the green chilepeppers to be equal in status to themselves—and can be quite discriminating in their treatment of them. That is, when they can get away with it. They even confine them economically and socially to areas that are less desirable to live. Quite naturally, this causes great resentment among many of the green chilepeppers and sometimes their anger is unleashed in unfortunate ways. This in turn causes an even greater chasm between the two groups."

"How terrible!" Elephant said. "Chilepepperland sounds like a horrible place to live! I hope I never even have to visit there."

"It sounds to me," said Ozma, "that if every single chilepepper who lives in Chilepepperland really wanted to, they could live in Peace and Love and Harmony alongside each other forever and ever. And then it would be a perfectly wonderful place to live."

"The problem as I see it," said Hootsey, looking as wise as he could, "is that for every chilepepper of whatever color whose heart is filled with love and kindness for his fellows, there are probably several who cannot generate those feelings within themselves. So I predict that the unfortunate state of affairs in that dark land will continue for quite some time to

come. It's a very negative prognosis, I know. But the accumulated wisdom I have acquired over many years tells me that this is so."

"I know one thing," said Lisa. "The people who live in the land where Dorothy comes from are much too intelligent to allow such foolishness to exist there."

The other members of the little group turned to each other knowingly, and slowly shook their heads. For they knew that the unfortunate fact of the matter was that the land where Dorothy came from had had a similar history. In fact, even as I write these words, there are people in the mortal lands who have lost their homes and all of their worldly possessions, and many, their lives, simply because they had the misfortune to be born different in some way than their neighbors.

Everyone became very quiet as he assimilated all that had been said. Ozma spoke first. "I would like to read, if I may, a poem from a little book given to me by a dear friend. I was reminded of this poem when Tweaty spoke of the difficulties the green chilepepper people encountered. The poem was written by a mortal human named William Blake. It is called *The Little Black Boy*."

*My mother bore me in the southern wild
And I am black, but O my soul is white
White as an angel is the English child
But I am black, as if bereaved of light.*

*My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And, sitting down before the heat of the day,
She took me on her lap and kissed me,
And, pointing to the East, began to say:*

*"Look on the rising sun: there God does live,
And gives His light, and gives His heat away,
And flowers and trees and beasts and men
receive Comfort in the morning, joy in the noonday.*

*"And we are put on Earth a little space
That we may learn to bear the beams of love;
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face
Are but a cloud, and like a shady grove.*

*"For, when our souls have learned the heat to bear,
The cloud will vanish, we shall hear His voice,
Saying, 'Come out from the grove, my love and care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.'"*

*Thus did my mother say, and kissed me,
And thus I say to the little English boy.
When I from black, and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,*

*I'll shade him from the heat 'til he can bear
To lean in joy upon our Father's knee;
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.*

By the time Ozma had read the last line, tears were streaming down everyone's face.

"That is the most beautiful poem I have ever heard... " Elephant sobbed, as Tweaty dabbed his eyes with a tailfeather, "... and so very sad that it will take so long for True Love to exist between all peoples. Only when they realize that in the ultimate sense there is no difference between them."

The story of the chilepeppers and the poem by William Blake left everyone in a very somber mood. But Time was not standing still, and you can be sure that that mean-spirited old spider-monster was not letting any grass grow under his feet. Even now he was no doubt growing stronger by the minute by sucking strength and courage out of any victim who had been unfortunate enough to be caught in his deadly web.

"We must be on our way," Ozma said, shivering slightly. "Elephant, why don't we all ride on you, and we'll talk as we go along and plan our strategy."

"Good idea," Elephant answered, picking Ozma up again.

Meanwhile, Tweaty and the owls flew up and perched on Elephant's head. Elephant then lowered his trunk to allow Nibbles to jump aboard and be lifted up behind Ozma.

"Okay, every one!" shouted Elephant as he raised his trunk high in the air and let out a great trump which just about blew everyone off his back. He then proceeded to waddle down the road making trumping sounds that sounded suspiciously like a trombone playing the bass part to *When the Saints go marching in*. In fact, pretty soon everyone was singing along—

Oh when the saints Go marchin' in. When the saints go marchin' in. Lord, I want to be in that number, When the saints go marchin' in...

THE JOURNEY TOWARD THE SNIFFER NATION

"As I see it," said Lisa as they traveled along, "there is at least one major difference between the problems in the Sniffer Nation and the problems of Chilepepperland. The Chilepeppers, so far as I can determine, are different from one another only in their viewpoints. Some may have had a better education than others, but all were born essentially equal. On the other hand, even if they were born equal, the Sniffer citizens have a real physical reason for their disagreement with the Stinkfoots. If you will forgive my saying so, I cannot believe that either group is necessarily better or more important than the other. It's just that they are physically unable to co-exist."

"As much as it pains me to say it," replied the Sniffer citizen, "I have to agree. After all, the Stinkfoot people used to get along fine with my people, so long as we kept our distance from one another. Now that the Stinkfoots are infringing on our territory, we are forced to take action against them despite our former friendship. But there simply is no alternative. They are taking away our homeland, and pushing us away. There is no other option but to push them back."

"It is a real problem when one specie overcrowds its territory," added Hootsey. "It must pave away all other life forms to further supply its own needs."

"But no one has the right to crowd out what Nature has already established," said Elephant. "Just imagine the chaos it would create if, say, the human race were to become so plentiful that it was leveling rain forests and wiping out all other forms of life to make room for itself."

"That would be terrible," agreed Hootsey. "And it is exactly what the Stinkfoots are doing. Once they have pushed the Sniffers into either isolation or extinction, they may continue to outgrow the territory they occupy and move into other regions where they will do even more damage."

"They have to be stopped at any cost," said the Sniffer man.

"No," said Ozma. "Not at any cost. Even though they are doing bad, they are still counted among my subjects. They are not enemies to Oz, and I will not have them entirely devastated. Our plan has to be fair to both sides, not just one. As we have said, neither side is better than the other. You yourself agreed. We can't allow either race to be lost in favor of the other. That would upset the balance of Nature."

"But how else can we stop them from expanding to wherever they like?" asked the Sniffer citizen.

"There has to be a fair way to settle the dispute," replied the little Queen. "And it is up to us to find it."

"What if we forbade them from eating any more stinkweeds?" suggested Nibbles. "That way, they wouldn't smell so bad, and the Sniffers would have no further trouble with them. Also, they would no longer need to be living in an area that would help the stinkweeds grow."

"You heard the letter," answered Lisa. "They won't agree to that. They like the smell that they get from the weeds, and they believe it will prevent anyone attacking them. They would never go along with that plan."

"We're almost there" sighed the Sniffer citizen. "But we are no closer to an agreement. What can we do?"

"I intend to speak with your President," replied Ozma. "And I will also meet with the Stinkfoot President."

Ozma and the Lunechien party of five was greeted at the border of the Sniffer Nation by President Humongous Schnozzle himself. Indeed, he must have had the largest nose that Ozma had ever seen. It was longer than that of Elephant! "Probisquous!" he said joyfully. "You're back! And you have brought an army with you!"

"Hello, Mr. President," said the Sniffer messenger. "This is Queen Ozma of Oz and with her are Elephant, Lisa, Hootsey, Tweaty and Nibbles from the Lunechien Forest of Oz. I have told them of our plight, and they have come to try and help."

"And not a moment too soon," said President Schnozzle. "The Stinkfoots have sent me another letter. This time, they are threatening to burn down our village if we do not surrender immediately, I hope that your small army is prepared to stand up to them."

"I did not come to fight," said Ozma with a firmness that surprised even her. "I want to see the two sides come to an arrangement. If that is not possible, we may then have to resort to stronger measures."

"I'm afraid that the Stinkfoots are beyond reasoning," sighed President Schnozzle. "The only recourse we have is to fight fire with fire."

Ozma could see that the Sniffer President was not going to deviate from his present frame of mind without a struggle. "I do understand your position and I sympathize with your feelings," she said. "However, before anyone does anything rash, I wish to speak to President McFoot."

"Then I suggest that you hold your nose," replied Schnozzle. "Otherwise, you'll be overwhelmed by the stench and probably pass out."

"I'll take that chance," said the little Queen. "Just give me an hour to talk to Mr. McFoot before you start any uprising."

"I will give you all the time you want," replied the Sniffer President. "At least, from my side. But if those stinkers start anything, you'd better believe that I will not sit doggo and let them destroy our homes."

"Fair enough," said Ozma. She then followed Probisquous to the edge of the Stinkfoot Nation. "I can't take you any further," he said. "My eyes are already starting to water. I hope you can handle the stinkiness from this point onward. It gets worse the closer you come to those guys."

Ozma thanked him and went on her way. Indeed, the smell was a potent one. She could see why it would ward off any potential attackers. She tried to hold her breath, but that was not something she could do indefinitely. She tried holding her nose and breathing with her mouth, but that was hardly a dignified pose for the Queen of all Oz. When the stench became absolutely unbearable, she found herself face to face with a little boy who sported the tiniest nose she could have imagined. It was about the same size as that of a ladybug. His feet, on the other hand, were enormous. "Who are you?" asked the lad.

"I amb Queen Ozba of Oz," she said with some difficulty. "I amb here to visit with President Stinky McFoot of the Stinkfoot Nation."

"I thought your nose was too small to make you a Sniffer," he said. "But it is sure a lot bigger than any Stinkfoot's. Hey, why are you holding it like that?"

"I'mb afraid that I'mb having a hard time dealing with the sbell of the stinkweeds," she explained, not wanting to hurt the boy's feelings by mentioning his feet, which Ozma felt certain were the real source of the offensive smell. She believed that it would be better to avoid any statement that might be taken as a gesture of insult.

"The stinkweeds?" replied the boy. "But they are delicious. They are our primary food."

This was not going very well, and the little Queen was already feeling nauseated by the stench. She would not be able to take much time explaining her situation before she became physically ill. This proposed a

problem, as she had never known illness to exist in Oz. Still, it was a matter that would require a bit of research. "I bust see your President," she sniffled uneasily. "Can you take be to himb?"

"Of course," said the boy simply, taking a handful of the stinkweeds and eating it. "I can take you to his mansion, anyway. I don't know if he'll want to talk. He is preparing to fight the Sniffers for control of the fertile lands, and is very busy with that right now."

"That's just the thing," said Ozma. "I need to discuss that batter with himb."

"Well," said the boy, "you are the Queen. Follow me."

Ozma followed the lad as quickly as she could under the circumstances. The smell only grew more pungent with each step. It was overpowering. But she knew that she had to help the two rivals to come to an arrangement quickly, as the Forest Monster could be doing nearly anything at this point, and she was losing valuable time. She wished that she had sent the forest animals on to speak to the Saber-Toothed Light Bulbs without her, but she knew in her heart that such an act might well have endangered her new friends. If she were not with the animals, the Light Bulbs might well have attacked them. No, this was all she could do. She only hoped that she had not chosen the wrong skirmish to settle first.

When she came to the mansion of President Stinky McFoot, she saw that it was expansive. It was a good sixteen acres wide, and had more rooms than any one man could possibly make use of. She hurriedly knocked on the heavy oak door.

Her knock was answered by a Stinkfoot who was dressed as a butler. "Yes?" he said to her.

"I amb Queen Ozba of Oz," she explained. "I amb here to speak to the President."

"Queen Ozba of Oz?" replied the butler. "But you are just a child. How can you be the queen of anything? Except possibly a toy box."

"I amb Queen Ozba!" she said. "I amb serious! I bean it!"

"Okay," chuckled the Stinkfoot. "I'll play along for a moment. If you are the Queen of Oz, what is it you wish to speak to President McFoot about?"

"He is planning a war with the Sniffer Nation," said the Queen. "I want to try to find a better way for your people to solve your differences."

"That is very touching," laughed the butler. "But if you were really the Queen of Oz, you would surely know that the matter is already settled. The Sniffer-snuffers will have to let us have the land we need to survive,

and that is all there is to it. Now, go home little girl. We have a lot to attend to, and there really isn't any time for your games."

"But I am really the Queen!" objected she.

"Yes," said the butler, "and I am Charles Dickens. My wife is the Queen of England. Now do run along." He shut the door before Ozma had a chance to say anything more.

"This is not going at all as I planned," sighed Ozma. But the pungent odor was already more than she could take, and she knew that she must get to some fresh air immediately if she was to be of any practical use to either the Sniffers or the denizens of the Lunechien Forest. Dejectedly, she returned to the Sniffer Nation. She was gasping for air by the time she arrived there, and so she breathed in several lungfuls of the cleaner, purer stuff. It was a treat that she was grateful for.

"So what did Stinky McStink have to say?" President Schnozzle asked Ozma upon her return.

"I did not get in to see Mr. McFoot," said Ozma sourly. "But I sure did get a noseful of your immediate problem."

"Our immediate problem is the fact that a bunch of people with stinky-feet are planning to attack and burn our village to the ground. I am sorry, Your Majesty, but we are left with no other recourse but to go to war with them and destroy them all before they do it to us. Surely you can see that they are unreasonable and unkind and un-un—well, a bunch of other words that start with 'un.' We can't allow them to UN-ify us if we can help it, and we Sniffers are a proud people who will not give in without a fight!"

"President Schnozzle," sighed Ozma. "I am not trying to belittle you or your pride. I just don't think that resorting to violence is the way to deal with any situation. It only leads to misery for both sides."

"Not if we win," replied the President.

"In times of war," said Lisa, "there are no winners." The hoot-owl had stayed back with the four Lunechien animals at the Sniffer President's modest home, and was also a little disappointed at Ozma's failure to speak to the Stinkfoot leader. So much had been riding on this meeting.

But Ozma had not gotten in to see him, and the simple fact remained that they were no closer to a solution than they had been before.

"Maybe we need those Saber-Toothed Light Bulbs right here," suggested Nibbles. "Then the Stinkfoots would be too scared to start a fight."

"I doubt it," reasoned President Schnozzle. "I'm not even sure that any Saber-Toothed Light Bulbs could handle the stinky smell of those buzzards."

"Maybe not," said Hootsey. "But it is an idea. What if we were to scare the Stinkfoots back into their own territory?"

"That may be possible," said Ozma. "It looked to me like they had no problem of overpopulation. It was really just their desire to grow more stinkweeds, and their incapability to do so in their soil."

"That's right!" said Lisa. "But no soil can go indefinitely growing the same crop. Anyone who lives in the forest knows that! And even the Munchkin farmers rotate their crops to keep their soil in balance."

"Rotate it?" scoffed the Sniffer President. "You mean like a phonograph record on a turntable?"

"No," replied Lisa. "I mean that if, say, a farmer plants carrots in his fields this year, he will plant something totally different next year. This way, the nutrients in the soil stay in balance and can be used to raise more carrots some other year. It's really very simple. It's kind of like replenishing with one crop what was diminutized by another."

"So you think that, if the Stinkfoots were to grow carrots instead of stinkweeds for a year, they could go back to stinkweeds next year?" said the President uncertainly.

"I'd say more than likely," agreed Lisa.

"But," put in Hootsey, "the Stinkfoots can't live without their stinkweed. Or they refuse to, in any event"

"Maybe we have a solution," grinned Ozma.

"But we don't," said Hootsey. "They will refuse to give up their stinkweeds. You know it's true."

"Not if they can have them," said Ozma. "Listen, President Schnozzle. What would you think of letting the Stinkfoots use your land to grow their food here this year, while the Sniffer farmers use the Stinkfoot Nation to grow anything that they want to eat? You can simply switch territories every year, and the rotation of crops will keep both of your soils fertile."

The Sniffer President sat down in a wooden chair. He was obviously deep in thought. "You know," he said after a time, "I think you have something there. If we can only state this plan to the Stinkfoots, I'm sure it would work. I am beginning to recall that even our own farmers have spoken about this rotation of crops on at least one occasion. And I'd bet that the stinkweeds would have made the soil over there ideal for our dietary staples!"

"More than likely!" said Lisa wisely.

"This is all very nice," said Elephant. "But how are we to propose this idea to a people who is as unwilling to listen as a deaf tree-stump?"

"We have got to gain an audience with President McIdiot—I mean, President McFoot. I suppose it does me no good to make fun of his foolishness."

"Not foolishness," said Nibbles. "Just lack of education. I didn't know until you guys just said so that rotation of crops was a good idea. Mr. McFoot just doesn't know about farming. He may be a very very wise man in a lot of other subjects."

"I think you're right," agreed President Schnozzle. "And I am sorry that I reacted so harshly to his actions, which I can now see that he did out of true concern and love for his subjects."

"In any situation," said Lisa, "it is always best to act, rather than to react. It makes you look a lot brighter."

"I wholeheartedly agree," said Elephant. "However, we still have to figure out a way to get McFoot into a position to speak to us."

"Yes," said Ozma, "that is true. If only we could lure him into a neutral place with a strong downwind, then we could ... "

The little Queen's words were cut off as a sickening stench suddenly blew in from the open window. A booming voice cried out, "That is the home of Schtupidface Schnozzle! Torch the place!"

Schnozzle ran to the window and saw President McFoot in his military regalia, and he was backed up by several dozen Stinkfoots carrying torches.

"Oh, no!" moaned the Sniffer President. "We are too late!"

The entire party hurried out the door, but were too late to stop the offensive army from setting fire to the home of President Schnozzle.

"My home!" cried he. "My books! My teddy bear! My original Rembrandt!"

"Halt!" cried Ozma. "I am your Queen!"

"It's that silly little girl I told you about, Master," said a Stinkfoot that Ozma recognized as the man who had answered the door. "Ignore the little scamp and let's get on with our revolution!"

"Wait a minute!" shuddered President McFoot. "I have seen pictures of the Queen of Oz in the newspapers. The place no longer is run by that Scarecrow man. I think this child is telling the truth!"

The Stinkfoot soldiers suddenly stood at attention and saluted Ozma.

"Your Majesty," spoke the Stinkfoot President, "I am sorry to inform you that there is a war on. We have need of something that these Sniffers are not allowing us to have. Our survival depends on their annihilation."

"No," spoke Ozma. "It does not. My dear friends from the Lunechien Forest have determined the problems with your crops, and we have

come to a solution." She quickly outlined the plan to rotate crops and territory.

"But the silly Sniff-heads have such a modest capitol building," sniffed President McFoot. "I would not want to live in that little old shack, not even for a day!"

"In case you've forgotten," said Elephant, "your troops have just burned up that little shack. I suggest that you put them to work rebuilding it in such a way that it will be pleasing to you both."

"If I go along with this idea," said the Stinkfoot leader, "will Schnozface do the same?"

"I have already agreed to it," said President Schnozzle. "Though I must add that the whole place be fumigated before we trade back. If you don't bind, I'mb starting to feel a little queasy."

With the situation settled, Ozma felt very pleased that there had been no war. Still, there was the other matter to contend with. There may still have to be a war to defeat the Forest Monster that was terrorizing the Lunechien Forest. Of course, Ozma would have preferred that it be settled as well as this situation had been, but this Monster was obviously not going to be ready to listen to reason for at least a jillion years. By that time, there may be no one left in Oz to stop him.

Chapter 9

ONWARD TOWARD THE SABER-TOOTHED LIGHT BULBS

The Sniffers and Stinkfoots agreed to help in the Lunechien Forest should their services be needed to help stop the devastation brought about by the spider-monster. President Schnozzle handed Ozma a small perfume bottle that, when opened, would release a perfume that could be smelled only by a Sniffer, and would reach the distance from the forest in only a matter of minutes. Ozma pocketed the little bottle and thanked the Sniffer and Stinkfoot Presidents. Then Ozma and the party of five was on its way to the land of the Saber-Toothed Light Bulbs.

"How far is it from here?" asked Elephant, who was still carrying the others on his broad back.

"Well," said Hootsey, "it isn't exactly close. We will have to travel through some fairly rough territory to get to the Light Bulbs. But I'm sure our pachyderm is up to it, if anyone is. And we do have our new Queen along as well. I really don't think we'll have too many problems."

However, unbeknownst to the little owl, problems were exactly what lay ahead of them. The elephant walked on for a few miles without incident, but then came upon a marshy area. "I don't remember this place," said Hootsey with disdain.

The marshy area was barren of all trees. Stretched out before them lay what seemed to be miles of reeds surrounding patches of dirty looking water with steam rising to form a veritable fog. The whole area looked very formidable and quite scary.

"I don't like this a bit," Elephant remarked, with a concerned expression on his face. "Who knows what's laying in wait under that water? And it doesn't look as if we could get very far without walking through it."

"And who knows how deep the water is?" Tweaty said. "It could be two feet or twenty; maybe even some of the solid ground is really quicksand!"

Just then a loud twittering sound was heard; soft at first but then increasing in volume to totally surround the little group. Then heads appeared above the reeds to signify the source of the twittering. The heads were square; powdery white; and with round eyes like you might see on a stuffed toy—except the expression on the square faces was anything but cute. One rather large creature stood up to reveal a body of the same substance. His whole body looked as if it was composed of giant marshmallows, including his arms and legs.

"*I suppose,*" he shouted in a booming voice that sounded as if it were coming out of the bottom of a barrel. "I suppose you people think you are going to traverse our lands."

"Not really," answered Elephant.

"Oh, how silly of me. Of course you are just here for a picnic," responded the creature with a sneer. "I should have realized. Quick! Grab 'em, boys!"

The little band was immediately surrounded by hundreds of the creatures who threw fishing nets over them, then rolled out wooden cages on wheels.

After everyone was confined in the cages, the leader stepped forward to address them again.

"Big mistake. Big mistake you made coming here. Not one trespasser has ever set foot on our land and lived to tell the tale. You see, we are the Keepers of the Crocodiles who live in these marshes and swamps. And in return for keeping them well fed, they have agreed not to eat us and to allow us to coexist with them in these waters. The substance of our bodies is a sweet marshmallow material and we would be prey to all kinds of creatures if we had to depart these lands. We were made of the same material you are at one time, but we made the mistake of crossing swords with a Wicked Witch and in a fit of anger, before you could say 'Jacky Robinson,' she changed us into marshmallows. So here we are, and here you are, just in time to feed a bunch of hungry crocodiles. Which is too bad, really, but that's life—death sooner or later. And in your case, it's sooner."

Elephant and Nibbles and Tweaty and Hootsey and Ozma and Lisa all looked at each other with despair and foreboding.

"Look," said Elephant to the leader of the marshmallow people. "I am a huge animal. My body will keep those crocodiles fed for weeks. While Tweaty here, and Hootsey and Lisa, are tiny creatures. The crocodiles would not even taste them. Why don't you let them go?"

"HMMMM," murmured the marshmallow leader. "You have a point there. In fact, the crocodiles could get quite annoyed with us for feeding them such tiny morsels. Okay. We'll let them go. But what about her?" he said, pointing to Ozma. "She would be quite a delicacy."

"Delicacy?" echoed Ozma. "I am not a delicacy. I am Ozma, Queen of Oz!"

The marshmallow man looked at the child and giggled. "You are the Queen of something? Yeah, right! And I suppose that next you're going to tell me that mortal men will one day be able to travel to the moon and back. Ha! That's a laugh!"

"But it's true!" argued Elephant. "Ozma is the ruler of Oz."

"Indeed," added Lisa. "I'll admit, I was also a little shaken when I first learned that the Queen of Oz was a little girl. But you must understand that Ozma is of Fairy descent. She is not like a mortal child at all. She has special abilities and powers that... "

"Silence!" shouted the marshmallow man. "I am not interested in hearing your lies! This child is simply a tender and mouthwatering human delicacy for the crocodiles to eat! That is all!" He looked at Ozma and laughed. "Fairy descent? This is not a Fairy! I know about these things! Fairies are tiny little critters with wings like those on one of our dragonflies. This is just a human child. A perfectly ordinary human child!"

Ozma looked at him indignantly, but she said nothing more. She knew that it would be hard to convince anyone of her origin without some sort of proof. And, indeed, what would serve as sufficient proof to convince this Doubting Thomas? She knew all too well that, throughout history, skeptics have always been known to cling to what they thought to be truth, even when it was a foolish belief that they were clinging to. Indeed, mortals in America had placed a great deal of faith in a substance called radium. A highly radioactive and dangerous substance, radium was being treated as a miracle medicine that had been hailed as a cure-all for anything! This marshmallow man was every bit as small-minded as the mortal men. If she were going to prove her position and power, she would have to break through the imaginary wall that he had built up in his mind concerning the proper look of Queens and Fairies.

"My good man," she said in her most dignified voice, "I can understand why you might assume what you do. It is true that I look more like a little girl than the ruler of a vast country like Oz. And it is true that some Fairy groups can be described as you have just suggested. However, it is also true that there are different kinds of Fairies, just as there are different kinds of marshmallows. The Fairy Queen Lurliné does

not have wings, and she looks quite human, too. But if it is so important to you, I can probably meet with your needs in a satisfactory manner." She put her fingers to her temples and concentrated.

"What are you doing?" asked the marshmallow man in puzzlement. Then: "Chicanery in Chittenango!" he exclaimed. "You have wings! But you didn't have them a second or two ago!"

"Nor have I got them now," explained Ozma. "But I have made myself appear to you as you would have me appear. Because I am a Fairy, I can make myself look any way I please. But underneath, I am still the same little girl I have always been." The wings vanished again.

"But how can this be?" shuddered the marshmallow man.

"It is really very simple," explained Ozma. "When I first took the throne of Oz, I had the same blonde hair that you see me with now. But I might decide one day to be a brunette." Her hair suddenly changed color as she spoke. "Or even a redhead." Again, the child's hair changed color. "Why, if I had a mind to, I could even make it green!" Again, her hair color changed. "You know, I think I might want to try being a brunette once in a while. Just for a change, you know. And if ever I must meet with dignitaries from another country—especially one of those narrow-minded mortal lands, I think I might want to appear to them as an adult. But, of course, I like being youthful, so I will not really age. I will just make myself appear that way on occasion when the situation calls for it."

The marshmallow man fell to his marshmallow knees. "Forgive me, your Highness!" he said. "You really are a Fairy! I most humbly apologize for my mistake. But you must admit, you really did look like a mere human child. How was I to know?"

"I don't think it should have mattered," said Elephant. "Do you really imagine that it is ever proper to feed any sentient being to a crocodile? Even a regular mortal child?"

"You are a wild animal," spoke the marshmallow man. "You should know better than anyone that such is the way of survival. We do not want the crocodiles to eat us, but we know that they must eat. I doubt that they would be satisfied with tofu or falafel burgers, either. These crocodiles are carnivorous, and they require fresh meat in order to survive. Would you have them become extinct?"

"He has a point," said Hootsey. "We really can't blame the crocodiles for their metabolisms. But we can't allow them to eat our Queen, either!"

"Oh, no," said the marshmallow man. "Now that I know who she is, I have no intention of feeding her to the crocodiles any more."

"Nor any of my companions," said Ozma in a tone of voice that would not tolerate any argument. "But you do have a legitimate problem. You are citizens of Oz, and therefore my subjects. I will not allow any of my subjects to be threatened by any carnivorous crocodiles."

"Then the crocodiles will not be able to survive," said Lisa sadly.

"But nothing can actually die anywhere in Oz," said Nibbles.

"Then they will grow horribly uncomfortable if they can't eat what Nature dictates they should," said Lisa. "I, for one, would rather die than have a constant emptiness in my tummy or lack of energy due to malnutrition."

"Indeed," agreed Elephant. "To go hungry is a terrible fate. Isn't there some alternative?"

"Nothing short of allowing the crocodiles to eat you," replied the marshmallow man.

"Then all is lost," sighed Hootsey. "Our benevolent ruler will have to decide who will be the recipient of her benevolence. It will have to be a choice between the carnivorous crocodiles or their natural source of food. One of the two must suffer."

"How sad," said Lisa. "I had always heard that rulers and queens had a tough job, but I had always doubted it. On the surface, it looks like queens get to live in beautiful palaces with servants who meet all of their needs. And they are allowed to go to bed any time they like, or eat chocolate ice cream for breakfast if they wish. But now I begin to understand why their lives are so difficult. I sure wouldn't want to have to make a decision like that. Basically, you'll be condemning an entire race to extinction—just like the dodo bird or the winkledejimpker!"

"Couldn't we use criminals and thieves to feed to the crocodiles?" suggested Nibbles.

"I will not allow even them to be tortured this way," said Ozma. "Even a thief deserves a chance to make up for his past misbehaving."

"Then what can we do?" asked the marshmallow man.

"Hey!" said Elephant, suddenly having an idea. "There is a grove of trees that grows near the Luncheon Forest. Some of the trees have fruits growing on them. Others have seed pods or alarm clocks or other such normal things that one always expects to find growing on trees. But I think there are also a couple of ham and sausage trees there. I'll bet they would suffice for the crocodiles. Then they wouldn't have to eat any living creatures in order to satisfy their natural cravings."

"A grand idea!" said the marshmallow man. "I have never heard of such odd trees as those, but I'm sure the crocodiles will be thrilled to

learn that they no longer have to be hated and feared by their fellow beings."

"Of course," said Lisa. "No one wants to be feared. And if they are now able to get their meat without any stalking or struggling, they might need some other form of exercise to keep from growing fat or sluggish. I think we should organize some group activities that will allow the crocodiles and owls to interact together as friends."

"And maybe Pinky and I could arrange a similar thing for us elephants to get together with them."

"I think the mice would be a little too scared," shuddered Nibbles.

"Not after I have one of those ham trees transplanted in their marsh," said Ozma. She turned to the marshmallow man. "Would you be willing to take charge of that?"

"Of course," he replied. "It will also make my own people live in greater comfort to know that the crocodiles will never be hungry for them again. But ... er, just out of curiosity, are there any marshmallow trees around? Just to be on the safe side, you know."

They all laughed.

Chapter 10

ALL ABOUT THE GILLIGOGGS AND THE DROFFS

The Droffs and the Gilligoggs had never understood each other. They were a different people, really. For example, the Droffs were shaggy-looking creatures with forms that resembled the Woolly Mammoth. They had short squat legs like tree trunks; short squat little bodies with arms to match, and heads that were too large for their bodies with eyes that were buried beneath long straggly shaggy fur. Their voices had a deep gruff sound not unlike a cave man might have sounded, and their words came out in a torrent of grunts that did not vary in tone and that did not exactly follow the rules of grammar. For example: "Who you?" "What you name?" "How got you this place?" "Why you here for?" etc. Whereas the Gilligoggs were quite elegant—even sophisticated—compared to the Droffs. They were tall and slender, with long delicate fingers that they waved expressively as they talked. They also had long hair but it was as soft and sweet smelling as the Droffs' hair was coarse and pungent. Their faces were feminine looking (even the males) with long curling eyelashes, delicately chiseled features, full lips, etc. The only perceptible difference between the males and females was that the males' voices were a little deeper, and they were a little taller.

Anyway, as you can imagine, two peoples that were so different had very little love for one another. Why this should be I do not know, except that people with different appearances seem to distrust each other, even when there has been no physical aggression between them. Neither group would willingly mix with the other either socially or even live in the other's neighborhood. Each race pretty much kept to itself.

I suppose that in a way, the Gilligoggs looked down on the Droffs. They considered them somehow inferior to themselves. The Droffs were well aware of this and were deeply resentful. Now if you or I were to try to analyze the exact reason for this, we might fall short of our goal. We could say that the Gilligoggs were far more intelligent because their speech was more sophisticated. But if you took the trouble to get to

know a Droff, you would find that, in spite of their crude manner of speech, they are, as a whole, equally as intelligent as the Gilligoggs, except that they express their intelligence in a different way. Another argument might be that the Droffs were not nearly so sweet smelling in comparison. Now, this may be true in one way, but in actual fact, the Droffs had just as high a standard of personal hygiene as the Gilligoggs. It was just that the Gilligoggs' olfactory senses were sensitive to the natural scent of the Droffs (just as the Droffs' olfactory senses were equally sensitive to the natural scent of the Gilligoggs). And while neither group found the other offensive in this way, they could detect a difference, albeit on a subconscious level. Another argument might be that the Droffs had lower social standards than the Gilligoggs. This argument, too, has to fall by the wayside. For reasons that we will not go into here, the Droffs had had difficulty in keeping up with the Joneses, so to speak. Due to circumstances beyond their control, they had not done quite as well on a socioeconomic scale. So there you have it. And this was the situation that Elephant and his pals were confronted with after their excursion with the Marshmallow people. As they continued on their way to the home of the Saber-Toothed Light-Bulbs, they hardly expected yet another interruption. But it happened all the same. A particularly tall and attractive Gilligogg woman who looked to be about sixteen approached them. She had dark hair that glistened in the sunlight in a particularly gorgeous manner which reminded Lisa of fine silk.

"Greetings," said Ozma to the young lady. Even though she was not anxious to be interrupted again, she was always polite to her people. She knew that, in order to be a good ruler for the land of Oz, she should be aware of the individual needs of all of the Ozites.

"Good morrow," came the reply. The lady's voice was like music. Beautiful music such as is usually reserved only for the Fairies, angels or gods. So in awe of this lovely lady were our adventurers that only Ozma found her voice which, though beautiful in its own youthful manner, did not hold a candle to that of this Gilligogg lady.

"I am Ozma, the Queen of Oz," said the little girl. "My friends and I are on our way to enlist the help of some people who live beyond your territory. I hope you won't mind if we pass through your lovely country."

"You are the Queen," said the lady. "I am only a princess. Far be it from me to tell you what you can or can not do." She seemed disinterested as she spoke. "My name is Dianna, and my father is the ruler of the Gilligoggs." If this young lady felt any doubt that Ozma was indeed a queen, she did not let on. Indeed, she seemed unconcerned as to the

identity of her queen. "But I shall tell you that the Gilligoggs are the only people in this region. We are all that is here. Well, unless you count the Droffs. But you could not be looking for the Droffs. They are so far beneath your station."

"Oh, no," sighed Tweaty. "I think we are about to get stuck in the middle of another time-consuming battle like the Stinkfoot and Sniffer war! This will not be a good thing for any of the Lunechien Forest denizens. Why, for all we know, that Forest Monster may already have destroyed all of our friends and neighbors back home!"

"There is no war here," said Dianna matter-of-factly. "We Gilligoggs are above such barbarous practices. Why, if I had to fight, I might break a fingernail. But we do wish that the Droffs would go away. So long as they are about, the property value on our homes must surely be going way down."

[Illustration Ozma and a Droff]

"My my!" said Elephant. "Are these Droffs some sort of frightful monsters, like the Kalidahs?"

"They are worse," said Dianna with a most elegant and sophisticated shudder. "They look like... Well, actually they look a lot like you, only they are all hairy and vulgar. You, at least, are not covered with all that coarse fur. Still, I wonder if you might be related to them." She took a nail file from her pocket and looked at her hands in an uninterested manner.

"So then, they are elephants?" asked Nibbles.

"Shaggy elephants?" tweeted Tweaty.

"Wooly mammoths?" questioned Lisa and Hootsey together.

"Neither of those," replied the princess. "They are just Droffs."

"We did not come to seek the Droffs," said Ozma. "Nor did we come to see the Gilligoggs. We were looking for the Saber-Toothed Light-Bulbs. Are they not in this area?"

"They are," said Hootsey with certainty. "I know they are."

"Perhaps," said the young lady. "Perhaps they are among the Droffs. I do not know of them. Nor do I especially care to. They might be unpleasant."

"But how can you know whether or not they are pleasant if you refuse even to see them?"

"Best to be safe," said Dianna. "Why invite trouble? We Gilligoggs have always known that we are superior to all other living beings, so we avoid contact with anyone else. If we start to invite trouble, we're sure to get it in great doses."

"But that's awful!" put in Tweaty. "You don't even give them a chance?"

"Why should we? They are not Gilligoggs. Heavens! They have the most outlandish-looking noses!" She eyed Elephant in a scrutinizing manner.

"I think I should like to meet these Droffs," harrumphed Elephant.

"Then by all means please leave as quickly as you can," said Dianna. "I would not want my people to have to gaze upon anyone who would associate with Droffs. They are messy things at best. I had offered you a great honor in speaking to you, but you obviously do not appreciate it. Had the dross not been with you, Miss Queen of Oz, I should not have even acknowledged them. Good day to you... " So saying, the princess walked away without looking back.

Our six adventurers hurried through the Gilligogg territory. Few of the Gilligoggs even stopped to look at them as they passed through. Before long, they came upon a creature who looked a good deal like Elephant, and who was obviously a Droff.

"Hey," said the Droff. "Who you am?"

"I am Ozma, Queen of Oz," said the child.

"You much good to be here," replied the Droff. "Me are called Biff. Who is them?"

Each of the five Lunechiens introduced himself.

"Me likes Elephant lots," said Biff. "Him look like Droff, but smooth. Him might relative to me I. Maybe like Droff. Ozma Queen and others like eat? Droffs no have much, but share. Me have oatmeal with much gravy. For nice Queen, me even serve with sprinkles. Me likes Queen lots, and Elephant. Have good seeds for birdies, too. Mouse want cheese? Me haves Swiss. Usually only haves Swiss on Sunday. It is holey. But for friend of good and nice Queen, me get some for nice little mouse."

"How kind," said Nibbles. "Thank you."

The Droff, though not as graceful as he might have been, served up a repast that was happily received by his guests.

"The Droffs are obviously more hospitable than the Gilligoggs," said Tweaty.

"Gilligoggs?" echoed Biff. "You am knowing Gilligoggs?"

"We just passed through their country on our way here," explained Lisa.

"Me wish me knew Gilligoggs," sighed Biff. "Them not let Droffs pass through. Not come to visit Droffs, neither. To Gilligogg, Droff land just place to dump stuff they no want."

"Stuff?" asked Ozma. "What stuff?"

"Old stuff, most," replied the Droff. "Rotted foods. Old packages. Cigarette ends. You am knowing. Stuff."

"What slob!" said Lisa with distaste. "And that princess had the nerve to say that Droffs were messy!"

"But it explains why the Droffs have such low-quality land," sighed Ozma. "It isn't that the Droffs are unsanitary. The very reason the Gilligoggs look down on the Droffs is caused by the Gilligoggs themselves!"

"They are high and sophisticated, I guess," added Hootsey. "But their refusal to see what they are doing to the world around them has made them into a life form that is most undesirable. They have made themselves become exactly what they dislike in others."

"Me thinks that is not Gilligogg's fault," said Biff, defending his neighbors. "Me has seen that all hatred do that lots. If you hate something so bad that you try to be away from it a lot, you start to be turning into it you self. Me not like hate. Me hate hate most hatefully."

"Yes," agreed Lisa. "When knowledge is used for cruel purposes, there is no knowledge any more. Both sides end up losers. I think the Gilligoggs could learn a lot from the Droffs."

"Me thank you, owl bird," said Biff with a smile. "You am nice. Me likes you."

"Me likes ... I mean, I like you, too," said Lisa. "Now tell me, do you know of the Saber-Toothed Light-Bulbs?"

"Light-Bulbs?" echoed Biff. "Not know. Not do. Maybe friend know of that, though. Friend are much smart and also wise. Him have good and useful glass head. Him and him's people living close nearby. Them have seen much."

"Hmmm," said Ozma. "Have them got large, sharp teeth?"

"Oh, yes!" said Biff. "Much good for opening packages! Much nice, friends are. You be liking Droffs' friends. Me can take pretty queen and nice Elephant and friends to see Droffs' friend as shortly as you am finishing eatings. Me can show to other Droffs, too."

"I would like that very much," said Ozma. "I think I will like the Droffs just fine."

"And them would be liking you," said Biff with certainty.

As soon as the visitors finished eating, the kindly Droff led them to an adjacent valley wherein they saw bright lights. These, as Hootsey explained, were the Saber-Toothed Light Bulbs themselves. From a distance, they looked pretty much like ordinary light bulbs. But as our little party drew closer, they could see the individuality of each Saber-

Toothed Light Bulb. One of the larger Light Bulbs saw them approaching and lit up. "Look, fellows!" he said. "It's Biff! And he has brought some friends along!"

"Hi, Watts!" said Biff to the light bulb. "Me is so happy to seeing you! Me haves the Queen of Oz here, too. Her wants to meet you. Her are much good and nice. You are liking her?"

"Of course," replied Watts. "Any friend of Biff's is a friend of mine!" He extended one of his long appendages to the small queen. She took it in her hand. "It is a pleasure," said Watts to Ozma. "I had heard that Oz had a new queen. I am glad to see that you are a kind-looking one."

"Thank you," said Ozma.

"So what can I do for you?" asked Watts, quickly realizing that there had to be some sort of business that had brought the queen to see him.

"Well," began Ozma, not sure just how to begin her explanation, "the Luncheon Forest of Oz has come upon a problem."

"Oh, no!" said Watts. "That's awful! What kind of a problem?"

"It seems that there is a terrible monster that is threatening our fine forest," she began. "A very large spider-like creature."

"Sounds beastly!" shuddered the light bulb.

"And he can sap away the energy from any living creature and render him an empty shell of himself," added Tweety.

"My!" said Watts. "That does sound like a problem! Is there anything I can do to help? If you need to move away from this monster, you are welcome to join us. The Droffs and the Saber-Toothed Light-Bulbs are not crowded in. We can make room."

"That is very kind of you," said the ruler. "But I was hoping that maybe you could come and stand up to the Forest Monster. No one else can do it. Even I would hesitate to approach them. But I know that you could do it. How could any foe of any size stand against you?"

"You want us to fight this Forest Monster?" said Watts fearfully.

"Well," sighed Ozma. "I am not usually in favor of such cruelty. I would be sorry to harm him. But I am left with little choice. Already he is too strong to be reckoned with. I have been a queen for only a short time. I do have fairy powers, but am not anxious to face the Forest Monster myself. If you could at least back me up while I try to reason with him..."

"

"Don't waste your time," said Tweety. "You can't reason with that thing. It will bite you in half before you get past the greeting."

"Say," interjected Hootsey. "Maybe that isn't so. We have already seen Ozma do some amazing things. She can change the color of her hair, for

example. Maybe she could use some of her fairy magic to scare away the spider! Why, if she can change her physical form, she could easily become a Giant or a Kalidah!"

Ozma looked fearful. "I'm not sure I'd want to try that," she said. "I might just make him all the more angry. He may already have more power than we think he has. But you do have a point. I do have some powers that I should try to make use of. Having only been a fairy for a short time, I'm not altogether sure what powers I may have at my disposal. Alas, I was the boy Tip for so long that I have not had much practice being Ozma yet."

"You could practice some magic on me," said Tweaty, trying to be helpful. "Maybe you can turn the Forest Monster into a pumpkin or something. I don't mind if you practice on me, so long as you put me back the way I'm supposed to be."

"That sounds like a good idea," agreed the Saber-Toothed Light-Bulb. "But still, I'm happy to come along to back you up. That way, if I am needed, I'll be there. If I am not needed after all, I will still have had a nice bit of travel to write about in my journal."

"You are very kind," said the little Queen. "And I am sure that I must practice using my powers a lot more than I already have. This will be a good learning experience for me, and can only make me a better ruler for the land of Oz." She put her hands to her temples and concentrated on the canary.

"Am I changing?" asked the bird.

"You look the same to me," answered Lisa.

"I need my Silver Wand," said Ozma. "That often helps me while I'm gaining prowess at a new spell." She had the magical tool with her, so she took it from its case and made a number of intricate passes in the air with it. Still, Tweaty failed to change.

"Maybe there are some words you're supposed to say while you're doing your magic spell?" wondered Elephant.

"Yes," said Ozma as a Light-Bulb jumped over her head. "I think you're right! Let me think... I should know the word." She again put her hands to her head and concentrated. "Haamhaamkablams-w," she said in a chanting voice. "Haamhaamkablams-w."

Tweaty began to change in form and substance. Within moments, he had taken on the shape of a housecat. He still had his yellow feathers, however. "Awk!" he said. "Look what you did to me! This is the worst possible form to place on a canary! Turn me back! Please turn me back!"

"I meant to make you a pumpkin," sighed Ozma. "But this is still new to me. I will try again."

This time, Tweaty became an orange elephant. He was no larger than he had been as a cat, but his shape was very clearly that of a pachyderm.

"How cute!" said Elephant. "You look like me, only smaller and oranger!"

"Yeah," said Tweaty. "I guess I do. But I'm not sure this is going to work on the Forest Monster. If you were to change him into another sentient animal, he'd just go back and do it all over again. You must turn him into something inanimate. But please, this is very uncomfortable. I'm used to being able to fly at will, and this form seems so ... so ungainly. No offense, Elephant. I think you make a terrific elephant. But I make a lousy one."

"But you do make a wonderful bird," agreed the pachyderm. "Yes, Ozma, do put him back the way he was. As adorable as he is, he isn't exactly a model specimen of my race."

"Of course," said Ozma, again raising her Silver Wand. She did her spell once more. This time, nothing happened. "I am sorry," sighed Ozma. "I am already feeling exhausted. I'm afraid I will have to wait a while before I can do it again."

"You mean," said Tweaty, "I have to look like this until you are able to rest up?"

"I'm afraid so," said Ozma sadly. "I'm sure that will change as I grow more experienced. You have to remember, I am only beginning to get my sea-legs as a fairy. Once I am more proficient, I'm sure I'll be able to do things like this all day long without becoming exhausted. Just give me time."

"And in the meantime I have to look like a little orange elephant," sighed Tweaty. "I'm sure glad my mother can't see me right now!"

"But Tweaty's not the main issue right this minute," said Watts. "Not that I am unsympathetic with his feelings or anything like that, but I do sense a certain degree of urgency at getting to your Forest Monster quickly. I'm sure that all of the Saber-Toothed Light-Bulbs will be happy to go and see what we can do. We are always anxious to help good folks like yourselves. And even though it isn't something I'm terribly proud of, I can be very ferocious when I have a mind to be." As if to prove his statement, Watts opened his mouth as wide as he could, revealing the sharpest-looking teeth Ozma had ever seen. Indeed, his teeth resembled sabres, which may have been the reason for their title.

Elephant shuddered in his skin. "I'm sure that a few of you would aptly frighten the Forest Monster out of our forest," he said tremblingly. "Hopefully out of Oz altogether!"

"Splendid," replied Watts. "Come, follow me. I know a short-cut that will allow us to avoid the Gilligoggs. Not that I am afraid of the Gilligoggs or anything. I just find them unpleasant to have to deal with. Come this way, and we will soon be on our way to the Lunechien Forest of Oz!"

Chapter 11

...AND HE SHOWS THEM PEARLY WHITES

As the little group, together with a party of five of the Saber-Toothed Light-Bulbs, turned a bend in the road, they came upon a huge dried sea bed. They could see for miles, and there was not a soul in sight.

"I think we're in uncharted territory," remarked Elephant, peering into the distance. "I don't remember anyone ever mentioning this. But it looks safe enough to cross. No more unpleasant surprises, I'm sure."

At that moment a deep disembodied voice said, "Dinnah iss serffed, laddies and lassies, pliss shtep oop to da table."

Everyone turned around to see who was speaking, but could see no one.

Suddenly, several mounds of sand that they had not noticed before began to quiver and slowly rise a couple of feet above the ground. The mounds shook themselves and the sand fell off to reveal about fifty *Great White Sharks*. They were not suspended above the ground as it first seemed, but were supported with legs like an alligator.

This was a frightening scene to behold, as you can well imagine. And when their leader approached our heroes, he repeated the words "Dinnah iss serffed," and licked his lips with anticipation.

He spoke again in that very strange accent, this time addressing Elephant: "Vatt iss a madder vi' chew? You nebber seen land sharks 'afore?"

"N-N-N-No, w-w-w-we h-h-h-haven't," stuttered Elephant.

"Habben chew?" the leader said, winking at his friends. "Den ah vill share some knowletch vi' chew to take vi' chew to da hereafter. (The other sharks roared with laughter at this). Ven our ocean dried oop millions off yearss ago, all da fishies died, includen uss sharks—except for two, zat iss. Undt dare chilluns ver born vi' liddle leggies. Ve arrda descendants off dose two, undt ve haff effolved over da yearss to our present selfs. Fully adapted to da land. Undt ve haff kept alive all deess yearss on a steady diet off hunsuspecting helaffant. So vat chew 'tink 'bout zat?"

"N-n-not t-t-too m-m-much," answered Elephant in a high pitched voice. "I-I mean, I d-d-d-don't know wh-what t-to think."

"Tell chew vat ve do," said the shark. "Chew seem like nice a guyss. Ve no eat chew tonight. Ve eat chew tomorrow—fer break'ast."

All the sharks laughed uproariously, whereupon they surrounded our heroes and promptly lay back down in the sand and went to sleep.

"Well," said Watts. "This is a fine how-do-you-do. But I don't think we have to worry about these guys too much. I seriously doubt they could eat glass, so we can protect the rest of you." He smiled a very sharp toothy smile. "Besides, they seem to be very lazy. It isn't like they've enclosed us in a cage or anything like that. What's to stop us from simply slipping out between two of them and walking away?"

"Ahh am," came a rumbling voice. "Ahh am ze vatchman uff ze Land Sharks. But chew do have a point. Ve cannot eat glass. Ve can break it, but ve can't eat it. Chew are uff no value to us. Ve vill only be able to eat ze meat creatchures. Chew that are a made from glass may go."

Watts and his friends made their most ferocious faces at the Land Sharks. "You will allow us all to go!" said Watts to the Shark. "You will not hold any of us back! Besides, we have with us the Queen of Oz. Your own Queen, for crying out loud!"

"Chew does have some pretty teeth, don' chew?" said the watchman. "But I am not afraid of chew, zo chew should leave now. I do not know chust 'zactly vat a queen might be, but I am sure that it iss delissious."

"We do not have time for this," hooted Lisa. "We are on an important mission to save the Lunechien Forest of Oz from a gigantic Forest Monster, and you had better not hold us back! The Forest Monster is already bigger than the lot of you, and he will come for you sooner or later if you don't let us stop him!"

"Vorest Monzter?" echoed the great shark.

"That's what I said," replied Lisa angrily.

"Chust vat iss ze Vorest Monzter made uff?" asked the shark.

"Er, I don't know. Whatever monsters are usually made of," answered the female owl. "Flesh and blood, I guess."

"Und he iss ass big ass chew zay he iss?" asked the shark.

"Probably bigger by now," put in Tweaty, realizing what was happening.

"Zen ve shall eat ziss Vorest Monzter!" said the shark. "Ve shall eat him 'til he iss only bones!"

Lisa was not entirely sure the Forest Monster had any bones, as she suspected that spiders had exoskeletons instead, but she saw no reason

to bring this up at the moment. "Then you really don't need us. It is against the laws of the jungle to kill more than you can eat, and the Forest Monster will easily tide you over for a good long time."

Ozma was not quite happy with the way things were turning out. She was not an advocate of killing at all. The thought of her willingly placing one of her subjects—even one so wicked as the Forest Monster—in mortal danger was a hard pill for her to swallow. Still, this development had apparently removed the threat to her own hide. "Then we shall be on our way," she said. "I will wish you a good night."

The shark thanked her and, having no one left that he had to guard, settled down to sleep among his fellows.

"This is odd," said Ozma as the group continued on its way. "We set out to rid ourselves of the Forest Monster, and now I feel inclined to find him so that we can warn him of his pending danger."

"You are kidding, aren't you?" asked Watts.

Ozma only looked solemnly at the ground and kept walking.

Chapter 12

THE LION KING

Now, when the Cowardly Lion of Oz had first tangled with and beheaded the Forest Monster, the other animals of the area had named him their king. They had since come to recognize Ozma as the overall ruler of Oz, but they joyfully accepted their tawny savior as their local leader.

The Cowardly Lion had taken to the job as well as any coward could be expected to do. He knew that, when he had accepted this position of power, he also took on a responsibility. The other animals were now his subjects, and he felt it was his duty to protect them from outside dangers such as hunters or other predators. He also thought it politic to offer his advice whenever one of his new charges had a question or a problem. It was one such event that is pertinent to this part of our story. About a week prior to Queen Ozma's meeting with the Land Sharks, a young wombat had come to the Cowardly Lion to ask his advice.

"Hello," said the smaller creature. "Your majesty, Mr. Cowardly Lion, Sir?"

"Yes?" replied the Lion, looking around to see where the voice had come from. "W-who's that? W-who said th-that?" When his large eyes came upon the wombat, he seemed to smile. "Why, Ricardo, there you are. I didn't see you at first. How are you doing?"

"Okay, I guess," said the wombat.

"And your mother?" added the Lion.

"She's fine," said Ricardo.

"I am very happy to hear it," said the Cowardly Lion. "But tell me, my friend, why you seem so glum. A boy your age shouldn't have any problems that would cause such glumness. What's wrong?"

"Weeeeell," began the wombat slowly. "It's kind of silly, I guess. But I wanted to ask your advice about something."

"You think it's silly to ask my advice?" said the Cowardly Lion, pretending to be hurt.

"No, that's not what I meant," replied Ricardo. "I mean, what I wanted to ask you about is kind of silly. I'm not sure it would be right to waste your time on. I think I should leave now ... " He turned to leave.

"Now now," said the Lion, becoming serious again. "No problem that is troubling one of my subjects is silly. Nor is it a waste of my time to hear the needs of today's youth. What's troubling you, my boy?"

"Well," began Ricardo, "you see ... well, I have this friend ... "

"Oh, it's about a friend is it?" said the Cowardly Lion knowingly.

"Oh, no," said Ricardo. "I'm not trying to pass the buck. It really is about a friend of mine. You see, he's a real copy cat. He likes to do everything I do, and he does it exactly the same way, and it's driving me wom-batty. I want to tell him to think for himself, but I'm not sure how to go about it."

"So what is it that he does that you don't want him to do?" asked the Lion. "I mean, if he is doing exactly as you are, you must be having a good time together. Aren't you?"

"No, I mean, like ... Like last week I found a really neat shiny rock that I thought I would like to keep. I took it home with me, and when Henry saw it, he went out and got one that was just like it."

"Is that bad?" asked the Lion. "The rocks are there for everyone to use as they need them. What's the matter with that?"

"And when I made a welcome mat for my mom to put in front of our home, Henry went and made one like it for his mom! It's like he can't think of anything for himself. He has to use all of my ideas. I wish he would find his own means of expressing himself, instead of always stealing my ideas. It's like, I learned a new song that I was going to sing at wombat school, and then Henry went and learned it, too!"

The Cowardly Lion looked at Ricardo and seemed to smile again. "Ah, Ricardo," he said. "I think your little friend is doing it out of affection for you. Imitation, after all, is the highest form of flattery—well, next to bringing you food, at least. I think your friend just admires you so much that he wants to be just like you."

"Really?" said Ricardo. "Gee whiz, I hadn't thought about that. I thought it was just that he refused to think for himself. Or maybe that he felt I didn't deserve to have anything he didn't. Or that he simply wanted to drive me insane. But maybe you're right. He does seem to like to hang around with me a lot. Maybe he just wants to imitate me because he admires me! That's pretty neat!"

"Yes it is," said the Cowardly Lion. "So you have a responsibility to Henry now as a role model."

"A what?" asked Ricardo.

"A role model," explained the Lion. "If Henry is going to do everything you do, you certainly don't want to do anything too foolish."

"Oh, yeah," agreed Ricardo. "That's true. Thanks for your advice, Mr. Lion King, Sir."

"Any time, Ricardo," laughed the Lion. "Be sure to give my respects to your mother."

"I will," said the wombat, scampering off happily and chanting something under his breath about being a role model.

"If only the problems of the adults were as easily handled as that," laughed the King.

"Mr. Your Majesty?" came another voice. "I want to ask you some advice."

The Cowardly Lion looked and saw another wombat. "Aha," he said. "Let me guess. Your name is Henry, right?"

"Gee," replied the smaller animal. "You know my name! You must know everything!"

"I do," said the Lion jokingly. "And I had a feeling that you'd be along soon. So what's troubling you?"

"Oh, it's nothing much. I just really wanted to come and talk to you."

"I see," laughed the King. "You are friends with Ricardo, are you not?"

The little wombat's eyes seemed to grow out of their sockets. "You really know everything! You really do! I'm sorry I cheated on my last spelling test. I promise I'll never do it again!"

The Cowardly Lion was a little taken aback by this statement, but he covered it well. "I was going to bring that up if you didn't," he lied. "You must tell your teacher and make up the test if you want to grow up to be a king like me."

"Oh, I will!" agreed Henry. "I will go and tell her right now!" He dashed off toward the wombat schoolyard.

"And so I am now a psychic," laughed the Lion. "Next I'll be expected to be able to fly or to leap over tall buildings in a single bound. But I guess it's all part of being a king. And I have to show my subjects that I am a good king, so I must do my best to be all that they expect me to be. I've got to be strong, and try to hang on. I have to be kind and understanding toward their needs. And most of all, I have to be brave!" He let out a practice roar that shook the very ground beneath his paws. "I am a brave lion! I am the King of the Beasts! I am feared by all, and I fear nothing! I am brave and I am..." As a grasshopper leaped in front of him, the Lion nearly jumped out of his skin. "Aaaaaah!" he cried. "What is it?"

What'd I see? I saw something move!" Another grasshopper jumped in the air, and the Lion, that strong and courageous King of all Beasts, bravely turned tail and ran.

Chapter 13

THE COWARDLY LION AND THE FOREST MONSTER OF OZ

The Cowardly Lion ran and ran. He had no idea just how long or how far he had gone when he stopped to catch his breath.

"This sort of cowardice is sure to make me old before my time," he said to himself.

As he settled down in a pile of leaves for a short rest, he heard something rustling in the bushes nearby. "Wha—" he said. "What's that? Who's there?"

"D-don't hurt me, Mr. Lion," came a voice.

"W-who are you?" shivered the Lion.

By way of an answer, a small brown monkey with shaggy fur walked slowly out of the brush. "P-please don't eat me, Mr. Lion," he said fearfully.

"Don't worry," replied the Cowardly Lion. "I had no intention of doing so. What were you doing in the bushes?"

"I heard you coming, and I was afraid," explained the simian.

"I can identify with that," said the Lion with a smile.

"I was afraid that you might be one of those awful spider-creatures that saps away the energy from everyone else," continued the monkey. "But I can see that you are not. You are a much nicer fellow than that. I think I've seen a portrait of you somewhere, in fact. You are ... My oh my! Can it be true? You're him, aren't you?"

"Who?" asked the big cat.

"You are the great Lion that defeated the Forest Monster before!" said the monkey. "I'm sure of it! What other lion in Oz is so big? Aren't you the one who is called the Cowardly Lion of Oz?"

"Yeah," said the Lion, not especially proud of the title, but happy that he was so famous with even this small monkey that he had never seen before. "That's right. I am the Cowardly Lion of Oz. It is a title that is far more honest than flattering. And who might you be?"

"I am Cubby," said the monkey. "I live in the Lunechien Forest of Oz."

"Lunechien Forest?" echoed the Lion. "I'm not sure just where that is. Is it far from here?"

"Pretty far," sighed Cubby. "I was running away."

"Running away?" replied the Lion, whose advice-giving nature was beginning to surface. "Now, dear little Cubby, my lad. Whatever problems you may be having at home are no reason to run away. You can't run away from your problems. You should go back and try to talk it out. Why, I can... "

"You don't understand," said Cubby. "I wasn't running away like a child who has had a disagreement with his parents over a cookie or something. I was running for my life."

"Oh," replied the Cowardly Lion. "Well then, that's a whole different ball of wax. If you were ... Huh? What? You were running for your life? What do you mean?"

"The Forest Monster has been sucking the energy out of all of the animals of the Lunechien Forest, and I know he was coming for me next! I was so afraid, I just wanted to get away from there as swiftly as I could. Then, when I heard your heavy breathing, I thought it was the Forest Monster coming for me. I thought for sure I was a goner."

"The Forest Monster?" echoed the Lion. "But I don't understand. I had a run-in with him once myself. I knocked his head off while he was sleeping. I know it was hardly sporting to do it that way, and I am a little ashamed that I didn't even give him a sporting chance, but I have to think of the innocent beasts whose lives were at stake."

[Illustration: Cowardly Lion and Cubby]

"I think there may be more than one," said Cubby. "Unless the one you fought somehow got himself repaired."

"I suspect that would h-have to be the case," stammered the Cowardly Lion. "I d-don't think there could be more than one of those creatures. I had assumed it was created by magic, sort of like a green elephant or something. But if it is alive again, it will probably find out who it was that defeated it before. It will be looking for me."

"I'm afraid it already knows who you are," spoke Cubby. "And it has found a way to take the energy from other beings and use it for itself. It is already so powerful that I doubt anyone could stand against it." He paused. "Oh, except for you, of course. I know you could defeat it. You did it before."

"Er, yeah," said the Lion, his eyes growing to several times their normal size. "I g-guess I d-did. B-but he was so much easier to tackle when

he was asleep. Now that he has multiplied his power, I'm n-not sure I c-could do it again."

"Oh, but you can! You must," said the monkey encouragingly. "You can't let him keep getting stronger and stronger! Sooner or later, he will find you. And he probably won't stop at that. He may cross the desert and go into the mortal lands. He might start attacking Ix or Mo or even Merryland! And then he may infiltrate the mortal lands like America, where your friend Dorothy lives!"

"D-Dorothy?" said the Lion, suddenly looking more angry than afraid. "She's just a little kid! He wouldn't do that to a child?"

"He did it to several of the small and helpless beasts in the Lunechien Forest," said the simian. "Even insects are not safe from him."

"Well, he is a spider, as far as that goes," replied the Cowardly Lion. "Insects are a normal diet for him. But small children are not! How dare he even think of hurting little Dorothy? What a wicked creature he really is! Where is he? Let me have a talk with this nasty arachnid!"

"That's the spirit!" cheered Cubby. "Come on, let's go!"

The Lion had already forgotten about his exhausted condition. The thought of Dorothy being in danger had taken precedence over all other thoughts in his head. He followed Cubby closely until he felt he had to rest. They traveled and rested for as long as it took before at last they reached the border of the Lunechien Forest of Oz.

"I sure hope we can find him in his sleep again," whispered the Lion to himself.

"Come on," said Cubby. "I know where his lair is. If he hasn't moved on to more densely populated territory, that is."

"W-wouldn't it be rude to just b-barge in on him?" said the Lion, his cowardly nature suddenly returning.

"I don't think so," replied Cubby. "I think we need to stop his wicked deeds as soon as we possibly can. We can't let him get to Dorothy, you know. Nor the Scarecrow or the Tin Woodman or the Woggle-Bug. No one is safe as long as the Forest Monster is at large."

"You're right!" said the Cowardly Lion dutifully. "We are the only ones who can stop him. Where is this overgrown daddy long legs?"

Cubby led the huge animal through the forest to the lair of the gigantic spider. When they got there, they were met with a most unexpected sight. There was a pack of Land Sharks. They looked frightful and hungry, and they surrounded Ozma, Tweaty, Nibbles, Lisa, Hootsey and Elephant. "Those are some of my friends who live in this forest,"

explained Cubby. "Except for the little girl. I don't know who she is. Is that Dorothy?"

"No," said the Lion, his voice sounding hollow. "What is she doing here? Why are your friends here? They should have followed your act and fled."

"It iss dinnah time!" shouted one of the Land Sharks. "I believe ve shall bekin vith ze big gray helefantt!"

"No!" said Cubby. "Don't let them do it!"

The Cowardly Lion trembled with fear as he watched the huge Land Shark turn to face the little monkey. When the Shark moved toward Cubby with its jagged teeth exposed, he pounced on it.

"Get ziss kitty offa my back!" screamed the Land Shark. "It hass sharp clawss, und zay are hurtin' me!"

The Lion jumped off, and the impact of his jump knocked the Land Shark over. To tell the truth, the Land Shark's legs were rather thin, and his balance was not very good to begin with. This displayed to the others the Land Sharks' main weakness. Thinking quickly on his feet, Elephant raced toward another of the Sharks and knocked it over on its face. The Shark's front teeth were dislodged, and it ran behind its fellows. Without its teeth, the Land Shark was much more vulnerable than it had been previously. Seeing that the other Land Sharks were distracted by the Lion and Elephant, the Forest Monster took its opportunity to strike. Within moments, the Land Shark was no longer a threat to anyone, having been drained of all of its life force. The added burst of energy gave the Forest Monster more ability to take out more of the Land Sharks. But he was so preoccupied that he failed to notice Watts and his four companions surround him with their ferocious teeth bared. This caused the Forest Monster to hesitate while he sized up the situation. Here he was, the bad guy, trying to get bigger and stronger at the expense of the Land Sharks, yet at the same time inadvertently saving Ozma and her friends, and now Ozma's forces were bearing down on him while his back was turned. "Hey! This is grossly unfair," he said, almost crying. Just then, a group of Droffs, accompanied by several Sniffers and Stinkfoots, arrived. The confusion allowed Ozma to use her silver wand to cast a spell. Between the Forest Monster, Elephant, the Stinkfoots, Sniffers and the Cowardly Lion, the Land Sharks were disabled within a matter of forty-five minutes. Those who had not been deenergized by the Forest Monster or otherwise rendered harmless by one of the others had fallen to their spindly knees and were pleading for mercy. One was staring directly into the foot of one of the newcomers and crying hysterically. All

the while, Ozma had been using her wand to turn the Sharks into tiny snails, which Cubby picked up and put into a nearby pond.

"It is finished," said the Cowardly Lion. He pushed his aching body to the ground and licked one of his wounds. "The Land Sharks are subdued. I don't think they will have the same cruel spirits now that they are snails."

"Indeed not," said the Forest Monster. Turning to the Cowardly Lion, he added, "You fought bravely. For one who is called Cowardly, you certainly didn't show any signs of having earned that title in this battle."

"But I felt them," sighed the Lion. "I was only acting brave because I saw my friends in danger. To tell you the truth, I was scared out of my wits the whole time."

"Your friends?" echoed the Forest Monster. "You call us your friends? Even me? Do you not remember who I am, and what you once did to me while I was sleeping?"

The Lion did a double take. "Oh, yeah! I was so caught up in the battle with the Land Sharks that I forgot what I had come here for."

"I was, too!" agreed Cubby. "But the Cowardly Lion was coming here to have a talk with you," he added, remembering the words that the Lion had spoken to him earlier. "He said that he was ashamed of what he did to you without giving you a sporting chance." These last words on Cubby's part were intended only as an observation. He had no idea that they would have any effect on the Forest Monster at all.

"Is that so?" wondered the huge spider. "You mean to say that you came here to apologize to me? And you even counted me among your friends. How wrong I have been in my assessment of your character. You are not so cowardly after all. In fact, I feel proud to have fought alongside of you. I would like to start over and get to know you for what you really are."

The Lion was taken aback. "You would?" he said. He had no idea what else to say. He had come to the Luncheon Forest thinking that he was to face the greatest enemy he had ever known, and that enemy was speaking to him as if they were old friends who had just met after a long period of separation.

"Of course I would," said the spider. "I see now that I was wrong to hate you so badly when I didn't even know what sort of fellow you really were. And seeing how I felt when we were attacked by those Land Sharks without having any way to fight them off showed me how grossly unfair I was for having taken the energy from helpless insects and animals. I was as bad as them, and I don't ever want to be like that

again! It's much too frightful. I'd rather have a solid group of friends than have all the power in the world."

"I think I am guilty of the same thing," sighed the Lion, still a little spooked by the abruptness of the Monster's turnabout in nature. "I knocked your head off as you slept, but I didn't know what you were like, either. All I knew was what I was told: that you were eating all of the lions and the other animals, and that they wanted to make me their king if I stopped you."

"So you are their king now," said the Forest Monster. "I do not begrudge you the position any more. You are welcome to it. I suddenly feel like I don't care for any position of power any more. When I was gaining the power I now possess, I was allowing myself to be blind to anything but my ever-growing hatred of you. Now that I see how unfounded that hatred really was, I feel that it was I who was the true coward. I was sapping the life energy from countless helpless creatures. I did not give them any sporting chance, either. Nor did I have any excuse to justify what I was doing except that I wanted revenge. It is I who should feel ashamed of himself, not you. Now I have all of this power and strength that was brought about by my hate, and it is no longer of any value to me. All it has done was to make me all the more angry and heartless. If this is the price of strength, I think I'd rather be weak. It is far better to be small and have friends than to have all the strength in the universe but be so full of anger and resentment that you can't even enjoy it."

"So now that you have become a mountain of power," replied the Lion, "you no longer care to be powerful?"

"Exactly," sighed the Forest Monster. "If there were a way to reverse time and put things back as they should be, before I ever hurt anyone, I would do it. I wish I could apologize to all of the poor animals that I sapped. If their spirits are still in the vicinity, I hope they see how utterly foolish I feel for having taken such unfair advantage of them."

"It is very sad that so many of our friends and families had to be destroyed in order for you to have learned this lesson," said Elephant, thinking sadly of the loss to the forest and its denizens. "But I hope that you will try to reverse your reputation now by putting your strength to good use. It is hard to forget what you did, but I think that, in time, we will all be able to accept you as a neighbor. At least, if you act like one."

"Oh, that I will do," said the spider gratefully. "I will do all that I can to make up for my past misbehaving."

"Then it seems we are no longer needed," said one of the Sniffers. "We met the Droffs on our way here, and they have agreed to help us plow

our fields. If our job here is done, I think we should like to go home and get started."

"Me wants to plow fields," said the Droff who stood beside him.

"Then something positive did come of all this tragedy," said Hootsey. "Not only have the Sniffers and the Stinkfoots made friends with the Droffs, but the Forest Monster has had a major-league change of heart. But can we at least find the empty shells of our families and give them a proper burial?"

"That would be right," agreed the Forest Monster.

"Wait a minute," said Ozma. "You mean to say that the bodies are still around? You didn't devour them entirely?"

"No," explained the Monster. "I only drained them of their energy. I never actually hurt their physical bodies. Only their internal energy."

"And their energies are still inside of you," observed Lisa, catching on to what Ozma was getting at. "So you never actually *killed* them! Their bodies are still alive, but dormant because they have no life energy. That means that, if we could reverse the process, we could put all of their energy back into their bodies again!"

"It would," agreed Ozma, "if the Forest Monster would agree to do this." She turned to the tremendous arachnid. "It will probably mean that you will have to allow yourself to become small again. I don't mean as small as you were when the Cowardly Lion first met you, either. I mean that you will again be reduced to the size of a regular, normal spider in order to restore all that you have wronged to their former liveliness."

"Oh, yes!" said the Forest Monster. "This I will gladly do! I am happy to go back to that small size. It allows me to maintain a lower profile, and I would like the opportunity to practice spinning my webs in private. I'll bet that, in time, I will be able to spin the most gorgeous webs you can imagine! If that comes to pass, I would consider it a great honor if one of my masterpieces could be coated in silver and gold, I should like to give it to Your Majesty as a gift."

"I would be delighted to receive it, I'm sure," said Ozma kindly, though she was not sure what she would actually do with such a treasure. "But I think it is now time to restore the Lunechien beasts."

"I agree," said the Cowardly Lion. "And, as everything seems to have come out well, I think it is time I head home to the Forest where I am now king. I've already been away too long as it is."

"Of course," said Ozma, taking his paw in her hand. "Thank you for all your help."

"Think nothing of it, my Queen," he said. Then he lumbered off toward Lion Country.

"And now," continued Ozma, "back to the job at hand." She put her fingertips to her temples and concentrated. The Forest Monster felt a slight tingling sensation in his heart, but nothing else happened.

"Maybe you need to use your wand," suggested Lisa. "Or say an incantation?"

"Or make some kind of magical motions?" put in Tweaty.

"No," sighed Ozma. "This operation is not as basic as all that. The Forest Monster has grown so vast that my untrained abilities are not going to work. It may be weeks before I will be up to this challenge. I'm afraid I'm just not used to being a fairy yet. But I think I could do it if I had an Anmars."

"A what?" asked Elephant. "I've never heard of an Anmars before."

"It's a standard magical tool that most wizards or witches would have. But I don't think there are any more witches in the area. Allidap and her evil sister were both destroyed by Dorothy, and the Witch of the Deep South got rid of most of her old implements, saying that they reminded her of a time she'd prefer to forget."

"How about Glinda?" suggested Tweaty, who was still in the form of a small orange pachyderm. "She's a Good Witch, you know. Wouldn't she have one of those Mars things?"

"An Anmars," corrected Ozma. "Yes, I'm sure she would. But the last I heard from her, she was going to visit some place that was having a drought and try to correct it. A place called Yoraitia. I do not know where it is."

"Yoraitia?" echoed Tweaty. "I flew by there once! I know where it is, and it isn't very far from here. But there was a dark and shadowy place on the way. I didn't land there, as I thought it looked scary and dangerous. But I can lead you there, if you want me to."

"Then we are saved!" said Elephant with a loud trumpet blast. "Even if that shadowy dark place is dangerous, no one can stand up to our formidable Forest Monster!"

"Er," pouted the Monster, "I'd rather not be thought of that way any more. Like your Witch of the Deep South, there are things that remind me of a past that I'd rather forget."

"Of course," said Lisa. "I'm sure Elephant didn't mean to imply that you were mean any more."

"Certainly not," replied the pachyderm. "So can we be on our way? I so want to be reunited with Tiger and Pinky and the others."

"Of course," replied the Forest Monster (and it is actually getting hard to keep referring to him by that title in light of his abrupt change of heart. I have to wonder, was he ever really all that monstrous?). "Why don't you ride on my back. I have very long legs, and it will make the going much faster."

They all agreed to this plan, and were off to find Yoraitia.

Chapter 14

ME AND MY SHADOW

It has been mentioned before that, although very comprehensive maps exist of Oz, there are areas that are totally uncharted and about which very little is known. One such area is the Land of Lost Shadows. In fact this may be the very first time that this mysterious land has ever been mentioned by any living human being. That is because no one has ever known where a person's shadow goes when he dies. It has always been assumed that when someone's physical form is no more, his shadow automatically disappears along with it. That is quite true, of course. But does anyone ever stop to think where it disappears *to*!

Now, it is very true that if you are separated from your shadow when you are alive, it can be sewn back on again. Any child who has ever read the story of Peter Pan knows that this is so. But when a person's body dies, the shadow has no desire to be buried in the ground or to be burned up. None of these things bother the body because it is not aware of anything. But the shadow is totally aware and is anxious to remain active and useful. Sometimes these shadows are helpful and good. Other times, the opposite is true. Scholars of Oz are already well aware of the time when the shadow of the Wicked Witch of the East made a ploy for revenge against the magical country. But no shadow can continue to remain alive outside of the enchanted lands. After all, it is but a shadow of its former self (if you'll pardon the pun). So it just zips off to Oz to reside in the Land of Lost Shadows. Now, the word 'lost' is a misnomer here. The shadow itself is anything but lost. In fact it is quite at home in its new abode. However, it is lost as far as the rest of the world is concerned. Well, enough of these explanations. Let us get back to our story. No created beings other than shadows had ever crossed the borders of Shadowland (which is the name used by the inhabitants). That is, no one had until Elephant, Ozma, Tweety, Hootsey, Lisa, Nibbles and the Forest Monster happened to stumble on it by accident. And the way that happened was as follows: Each member of the little band was so

preoccupied with his own thoughts—especially Elephant. He was still thinking how close he had come to being eaten by the Land Sharks and the miraculous change of heart on the part of the Forest Monster. As for the Monster himself, he was feeling bad about all the evil things he had done, and was contemplating what he would say in apology to all of the animals he had wronged. Since it was getting dark by this time, he failed to notice the thick, dark area looming up in front of him, when CRASH! He went straight into it. And since it was really dark now, the shadowy occupants were quite invisible. Hootsey suggested that there was no point in stumbling around in the dark, and that the best thing to do would be for everyone to lie down and go to sleep.

This seemed like a fine idea to Elephant, who promptly flopped down on the grass—almost squashing Nibbles, who was already snoozing under him. The Forest Monster also took a position of repose, but far enough away from his smaller charges that he knew he would not roll over and squish any of them. In the twinkling of an eye, he was fast asleep. But it was hardly a restful sleep that he experienced. It was a deeply troubled sleep. In his dreams, he saw the tortured faces of the many that he had mistreated in his angry power play. The wispy night visions experienced by his companions were hardly any more enjoyable, except those of Princess Ozma, who rated enough respect from the Sleep Fays that they would not allow any negative influences to disturb her sleep. Instead, she saw visions of the beautiful Love Fairy, and the lilting, music-like laughter of the Laughing Fay. These served to make her smile inwardly as she slept.

Ozma was the first to awaken. She felt refreshed and invigorated. The sound of birds chirping and the warm sun on her face brought her out of her deep restful slumber.

The first thing that her eyes focused upon was a two-dimensional shadowy shape moving toward her along the ground in much the same manner as the shadow of an airplane would. She instinctively looked up at the sky to see what flying object might be casting its shadow on the ground. But there was nothing to account for it. Then she became apprehensive, for it occurred to her that perhaps one of the land sharks had escaped her snailifying spell and followed them and that was what she was seeing. But no; it was definitely just a shadow, for it had stopped right in front of her. Then the shadow stood up as it became a three-dimensional human being.

"Good morning," said the shadow, who had now taken the form of a very ordinary man. This awoke the others, who were surprised to see a man in a baseball uniform.

"Forgive me for startling you all," said the man. "But you see, when the sun comes up high enough in the sky, we shadows resume the forms of our previous selves. In fact, we are identical to our previous selves except that our bodies are composed of high-frequency molecules as opposed to the low frequency molecules of our earthly bodies." Seeing the quizzical look on everyone's face, he quickly continued: "It's quite simple, really. We are composed of the same material you are. After all, none of us could reside in Oz if we weren't."

"It makes sense, when you think about it," said Ozma. "But I am very curious as to why you are wearing baseball clothes. Have you just come from a game?"

"Yes, I have," answered the man. "Baseball is pretty big in Shadowland. You see, we have a large population here of old baseball players and baseball fans. It's the biggest thing we all have in common, so we tend to congregate together. As a matter of fact, we not only have games between ourselves, but we invite teams in the United States to visit when the players are in restitude. We have a wonderful time together. Of course, the visiting players don't usually bring back the memory of the games when they awaken in the morning—Well, maybe some fragmented dreams—but that doesn't detract from the game or the great fun we have. Those young whippersnappers think they'll show us old timers a thing or two, but boy, do they get a run for their money!"

"Might I inquire as to your name?" questioned Tweaty, rather timidly.

"Why yes," came the simple reply. "My name is Richard Marquard. Please, just call me *Rube*."

"Sounds like a backwoods hillbilly name to me," said Elephant, intending his words to sound like friendly teasing.

"Ha ha!" laughed Rube, equally friendly. "My nickname being what it is, you probably automatically assume that I must have been a country boy. That's what most people figure. But it's not so. Fact is, my father was the Chief Engineer of the City of Cleveland, and that is where I was born and reared."

"Okay," said Elephant. "So then, why is it that you are called *Rube*?"

"Well, it's a long story," answered the ball player's shadow.

"Then we had better not take the time to hear it all now," said Hootsey. "We have a very important mission to fulfill."

"Yes," agreed Lisa. "But perhaps Mr. Rube could help us. I think we should bring him along."

"A grand idea!" exclaimed Ozma. "Mr. Marquard, would you be so kind as to join us on our mission? I would like to hear your story, and then will be happy to tell you ours."

"If I had been asked to join an undefined questing party by any other than the Queen of all Oz, I might have hesitated," came the reply. "But as it is from you, I will come along."

"Splendid!" said Elephant. "Then let us be off!"

Rube was lifted atop the Forest Monster, as were Elephant and the others, and from this high podium Rube began his unique tale. "It all started with my father," he explained. "Like I say, he was the Chief Engineer of the city of Cleveland. As far as he was concerned, the only important thing was for me to get a good education. But as far back as I can remember, all I could think of, morning, noon and night, was baseball.

"Now listen,' Dad would say. 'I want you to cut this out and pay attention to your studies. I want you to go to college when you're through high school, and I don't want any foolishness about it. Without an education, you won't be able to get a good job, and then you'll *never* amount to anything.'

"I already have a job,' I'd say.

"You've got a job? What are you talking about?'

"I'm going to be a ballplayer,' I'd explain. But Dad was not very receptive.

"A ballplayer?' he'd say, throwing his hands up in the air. 'What do you mean? How can you make a living as a ballplayer? I don't understand why a grown man would wear those funny-looking suits in the first place.'

"Well,' I'd answer. 'You see policemen with uniforms on, and other people like that. They change after they're through working. It's the same way with ballplayers.'"

"That sounds reasonable to me," said Tweaty.

"Me, too," said Queen Ozma. "I certainly don't wear the same clothes to a meeting with a foreign dignitary as I would wear while playing marbles with Jellia Jamb."

"Certainly not!" agreed Nibbles.

"If only my father had thought that way," sighed Rube's shadow. "But he just scoffed. 'Do ballplayers get paid?' he'd ask.

"Yes,' I told him. 'They get paid.'

"I don't believe it!' he would rant.

"And 'round and 'round we would go. We'd actually have that same argument, almost always word-for-word, at least once a week. Twice a week in the summer. Sometimes my grandfather—my father's father—would get involved in it. My grandfather was a nice man who liked baseball, and he would usually take my side.

"'Listen,' he'd say to my father, 'when you were a youngster, I wanted you to be something, too. I wanted you to be a stonecutter, same as I was when I came over from the old country.' Oh, did I mention before that my grandfather was a stonecutter?"

"No," replied Elephant. "You just said that he was a nice man who liked baseball."

"Okay," said Rube's shadow. "Well, my grandfather had been a stonecutter, and had tried to persuade Dad to become one, too. 'But no!' he would say loudly into my father's ear, 'You wouldn't listen. You wanted to be an engineer. So you *became* an engineer. And a darned good one, too. Had I forced you into masonry, you would never have excelled in the craft for which you had no love. And you would have been very unhappy. Now Richard wants to be a baseball player. He's so determined that nothing is going to stop him. Let's give him a chance and see what he can do. Don't force the boy to give up on his dreams.'"

"Your grandfather sounds like a wise man to me," said Ozma.

"He was," said the shadow. "But Dad would never listen. 'Ballplayers are no good,' he'd insist. 'Ballplayers are no good, and they never will be any good.' It was very frustrating. He would usually end the argument by slamming the door and going outside to sit on the porch. And he would stop speaking to my grandfather or me for hours at a time."

"That's too bad," said Tweaty. "If you were good at baseball, you should have stuck with it."

"But I did stick with it," replied the shadow. "I told you, I just came from a game."

"Oh, yeah," said Tweaty. "So you mean you brought your Dad around?"

"Well," the shadow said slowly. "The thing is, I was always very tall for my age. I had three brothers and a sister, and my sister was the shortest of the five of us. She grew to be six feet two. So you see, I was constantly hanging around the older kids and playing ball with them instead of hanging with kids my own age. When I was about thirteen or so, I used to carry bats for some of the Cleveland Indians, such as Elmer Flick, Napoleon Lajoie and Terry Turner. Of course, they were not called the Cleveland Indians then. They were called the Cleveland Bronchos in

those days. Then the Cleveland Naps—after Napoleon Lajoie. Anyway, after the regular season was over, a lot of them would barnstorm around the Cleveland area, and sometimes I'd be their bat boy.

"Later on, I even pitched a few games for Bill Bradley's Boo Gang," the shadow added proudly.

"Boo Gang?" said Lisa with a little shudder.

"Boo like a Ghost?" added Hootsey.

"No, no," laughed Rube's image. "Bill Bradley was the third baseman for the Cleveland Indians—and one of the greatest who ever lived—and he also barnstormed with his 'Boo Gang' after the season was over. So by the time I was fifteen or so, I knew a lot of ballplayers. And I had my heart set on being a Big Leaguer myself.

"Well, one of my best friends was a catcher named Howard Wakefield. He was about five years older than I was. In 1906 he was playing for the Waterloo Club in the Iowa State League, and ... "

"1906?" echoed Lisa. "But ... But ... "

"What's wrong?" asked the ballplayer's shadow.

"You have to be mistaken," said Elephant, recognizing the reason for his friend's perplexity. "It isn't 1906 yet. It's only 1902!"

"I think he's from the future," said Lisa. "Rube Marquard is from a year that hasn't happened yet."

"But how is that possible?" asked Hootsey.

"Have you ever noticed," explained the shadow, "how you can stand in the middle of two or more different sources of light, and cast several shadows in various directions?"

"Of course," said Hootsey. "And sometimes I have a long skinny shadow that is faint and grayish, while I also have a short fat shadow right under me which is almost completely black. And when I'm flying, I can make lots of different shadows that don't even touch me anywhere."

"Yes," said Rube. "And these are all your shadow. If you go on a stage with many footlights, you will cast various images of various shades of gray. These are all your shadow. You see, your shadow can go in any direction, backward or forward. It can reach to a distant area or stay situated close by. And it can do all at one time without ever letting go of you—even if, as you say, it isn't actually touching you. You are always attached at some place. As the shadow of Rube Marquard, I touch him always, even while he is far away in repose. I can be his past, his future, or his mirror image. That is why I can remember experiences he hasn't even had yet. Sometimes we shadows accidentally create a feeling of deja

vu in our live counterparts, which can lead to a false sense of psychic ability."

"I don't know much about American sports figures," said Elephant. "But it sounds like you are someone who is or will be important to Baseball. But how did you convince your dad to let you play?"

"Yes," agreed Hootsey. "You still haven't told us."

"Of course," replied the shadow. "As I was saying, I had a friend by the name of Howard Wakefield. He was playing for the Waterloo Club in the Iowa State League. That summer—when I was only sixteen—I got a letter from him.

"*'We can use a good left-handed pitcher,'* the letter said. *'And if you want to come to Waterloo, I'll recommend you to the manager.'* I think Howard thought that I was at least eighteen or nineteen, as I was so big for my age.

"I wrote Howard and told him that my dad did not want me to play ball, so I didn't think he'd give me the money to go. If I asked him, he'd probably hit the ceiling and rap me over the head with something. Aside from that, I was ready to go."

"Well," said Lisa indignantly, "a good father would have encouraged you to go. He should have been able to see that you were good at what you did, and that you deserved this chance to make good."

"Absolutely," agreed Hootsey. "But I don't expect that your father gave you the money. Did you ever get to Waterloo?"

"Well," answered the shadow, "pretty soon I got a telegram from the Waterloo manager. He said that I had been recommended very highly by Howard Wakefield, and asked if I would like to come and try out for the team. The Waterloo manager offered to reimburse the cost of transportation if I was given a contract."

"But you still couldn't get the money from your father," said Ozma.

"No," sighed the ballplayer. "It was hardly an improvement over Howard's letter. So I just went upstairs to my room and closed the door. Then I wrote back a long letter to the Waterloo manager, explaining that I didn't have any money for transportation. But I told him that, if he sent me an advance right now for transportation, I'd be on the very next train to Waterloo and he could take it out of my salary later on."

"That's assuming you were hired, of course," said Lisa.

"Yes," agreed Rube. "But I didn't have the slightest doubt that I would make good. And, of course, I didn't mention that I was only sixteen years old. I thought it best to leave that out."

"I mailed the letter to Iowa, and then I waited on pins and needles for an answer. Every day I had to be the first one to get at the mail, because if anyone else saw a letter to me from the Waterloo Ball Club—well, that would have been enough to alert Dad to what was going on and I'd have been sunk. So every day I waited for the first sign of the mailman and tried to get to him before he reached the house. As it turned out, I could have saved myself a lot of worrying."

"No letter ever came?" guessed Lisa.

"Nope. Three weeks passed and still no answer." The shadow sighed again. "I couldn't understand what had gone wrong. Maybe it was against the rules to send transportation money to somebody not yet under contract? Maybe they didn't know how good I really was? Maybe this and maybe that. It was another frustrating period of my life. Finally, I just couldn't stand it any longer. I gave my folks a story about camping with the Boy Scouts and hitch-hiked to Waterloo."

"You lied to your parents?" said Ozma, startled by the very idea.

"Yes, I did. It was a hard thing for me to do, going against Dad like that. But I was well punished for the deed. Believe me! Have you ever had to hitch-hike, sleep in open fields, or hop a freight train? It took me five days and five nights. The longest five days of my life, and I was only sixteen at the time. But I did get there. Tired, anxious and half-starved, I blew into the Illinois Central Station at Waterloo, Iowa on a freight train early in the evening. Just before it stopped, I jumped off and went head over heels right in front of the passenger house. I hardly had time to pick myself up off the ground before the stationmaster grabbed me and shouted, 'What do you think you're doing? Come on, get out of here before I run you in!'

"No,' I said. 'I'm reporting to the Waterloo Ball Club.'

"You're what?' he says. 'My God! Did you ever wash your face?'

"Yes I did,' I said. 'But I've been travelling for five days and five nights, and I am anxious to get to the Ball Park. Where do the ballplayers hang around?'

"At the Smoke Shop,' he says. 'Down the street about a half of a mile. If you walk down there, probably whoever you're looking for will be there.'

"So I thanked him and said I'd see to it that he got a free pass to the ball game as soon as I got settled, and started off for the Smoke Shop. It turned out that two brothers owned the Smoke Shop, and they also owned the Ball Club. One of them was behind the counter when I

walked into the place. He took one look at me and let out a roar like a lion's.

"What are you doing in here?" he yelled. "This is a respectable place! Get out of here!"

"Wait a minute," I says. "I've got a telegram from the manager of the Ball Club to report here, and if I make good I'll get a contract."

"Are you kidding?" he says. "Who in the world ever recommended you?"

"Howard Wakefield did," I said.

"Well," says the guy behind the counter, "Wakefield is in back shooting billiards. We'll soon settle this!"

"I'd like to go back and see him," I said.

"Don't you go back there," he shouted. "Don't even think about going back there! You'll drive everybody out. Did you ever take a bath?"

"Of course I did," says I. "But I've bummed my way here and I haven't had a chance to clean up yet."

"So he goes into the back and in a minute Howard comes out 'Cripes!' he says. 'What happened to you?'"

"I was explaining it to him when in came Mr. Frisbee, the manager, and I was introduced to him. 'I received your telegram,' I said. 'I didn't have enough money to come first class or anything like that, but here I am.'"

"Keokuk is here tomorrow," says the manager, "and we'll pitch you."

"We'll pitch you?" echoed Hootsey. "What a mean thing for him to say! Imagine, just pitching you out after all your effort to get there!"

"No, no," explained the shadow. "He meant that he wanted me to pitch the next day. But I was all tuckered out and hardly ready to do that. I really wanted to have a bath and get some sleep."

"Tomorrow or never, Young Fellow," he says to me. "Tomorrow or not at all."

"All right," I said. "But could I have five dollars in advance so I can get a clean shirt or something?"

"After the game tomorrow," he said. "Then he just walked away from me like I was nothing."

"How rude," said Elephant.

"The least he could have done would have been to let you take a shower in the locker-room," said Lisa.

"Well, I got to clean up," admitted Rube. "Howard took me to his rooming house and gave me something to eat. They let me sleep on an extra cot they had. And the next day we went to the Ball Park and I was

introduced to the players and given a uniform that was too small for me. The Keokuk team was shagging balls while I warmed up, and they kept making comments about green rookies and bushers and nitchies and such; and how they'd knock me out of the box in the first inning; and how I should have stayed home with my Mommy. Ooh, I felt terrible. I had an awful headache and I was exhausted! Still, I was determined to show them that I could make good, and I went out there and won that game six against one!

"With that," continued the shadow, "I felt sure I'd be offered a contract. So after the game, I went to Mr. Frisbee and said, 'Welp, I showed you I could deliver the goods. Can we talk about a contract now?'

"'Oh,' he says to me. 'Keokuk is in last place. Wait until Oskaloosa comes in this weekend. They are in second place. They are a rough team, and if you can beat them, then we'll talk.'

"'Can't I get any money—any advance money—on my contract?' I asked him.

"'You haven't got a contract,' he said.

"'All right,' says I, and I didn't say another word. I knew that he was right. I'd have to prove myself before I could expect any handouts from this man. So I stayed quiet. I didn't say anything to anybody that evening. But when it got dark, I went down to the railway station, and the same stationmaster was there. He remembered me.

"'Hey!' he says. 'You pitched a fine game today! I was there, and you did a great job! What are you doing back here? Did you come to give me that free ticket you promised me?'

"'No,' I said to him sadly. 'I'm sorry. I'm going back home to Cleveland, and I want to know what time a freight comes by.' Then I explained to him about everything that had happened. Oh, he was very nice to me. He completely understood where I was coming from. After we had talked for awhile, he said, 'Look, the train comes in at one o'clock in the morning and the engine unhooks and goes down to the water tower. When it does, you sneak into the baggage compartment. Meanwhile, I'll talk to the baggage man before the engine gets hooked up again. So when the train pulls out and is about five miles out of town, he'll open the baggage door and let you out.'

"And that is pretty much what happened," continued Rube. "When we were five miles out of town, the door opened and the baggage man appeared. I talked with him all the way to Chicago, and as we got close to the yards he says to me, 'Okay, you'd better get ready to jump now. There are a lot of detectives around here and if you're not careful, they'll

jump on you and throw you in jail. So once you get to the ground, do not hesitate! Beat it away from here as fast as you can!"

"The baggage man must have told the engineer about me, as we slowed down to a crawl just before we approached the Chicago yards, and off I jumped. I got out of there quick and took off down the street. I don't know what street it was, and I'm not sure where I was headed, but I do remember that I was awfully tired. It was the middle of the morning and I had hardly slept a wink the night before. I had staggered about three or four blocks when I passed by a fire engine house. Evidently all of the firemen were out at a fire, because the place was deserted. I was tired, very tired, so I went in and sat down. Well, they had a big bellied iron stove in there, and it was warm. I guess I must have fallen asleep, as the next thing I knew, a couple of firemen were shaking me and doing everything they could do to wake me up. They called me a bum and a lot of other bad names, and told me to get out of there or they'd have me thrown in jail.

"'I'm no bum,' I said. 'I'm a ballplayer.'

"'What?' the firemen laughed. 'You, a ballplayer? Where did you ever play?'

"'In Cleveland, around the sandlots,' I told them proudly. 'And in Waterloo, Iowa, too! I beat the Keokuk team six to one!'

"'Yeah?' said one of the firemen. 'And last week I had dinner with Santa Claus and the Pope. So I suppose you're going to tell me that you are close buddies with Three-Fingered Brown, Chance, Tinker and Evans—I mean, Evers—and all of those fellows?'

"'No,' I said. 'I don't know them. But some day I'll be playing with them, or against them, because I'm going to get in the Big Leagues.'

"'Where are you going now?' asked the firemen.

"'Back home to Cleveland,' I told them.

"'Have you got any money?' they asked me.

"'No,' I answered. I had to be honest, after all.

"So they got up a little pool of about five dollars and said, 'Well, on your way. And use this to get something to eat.'

"I thanked them, and as I left I told them that some day I would be back again. 'When I get to the Big Leagues,' I said, 'I'm coming out to visit you when we get to Chicago.'

"And home I went. I played around home all the rest of the summer, and then the next summer—that would have been 1907, if I recall correctly, even though I'm remembering things that have yet to happen and I'm remembering them backwards—I took a job with an ice cream

company in Cleveland. I made twenty-five dollars a week: Fifteen for checking the cans on the truck that would take the ice cream away, and ten dollars a Sunday, when I pitched for the company team. It was a good team. We played the best semipro clubs in the Cleveland area, and I beat them all. I was only seventeen, but I hardly lost a game.

"Then one day I got a postal card from the Cleveland Ball Club, asking me to come in and talk to them. Mr. Kilfoyl and Mr. Somers, the owners of the club, wanted to see me."

"Hurray!" said Hootsey. "So then, your father must have come around by then?"

"Hardly!" said the shadow. "My Dad saw the postal card and became very upset. 'So,' he said to me. 'I see that you still want to be a ballplayer.'

"'Yes,' I admitted. 'I do. And I'm going to be a great one, too! Just you wait and see! Some day you're going to be proud of me!'

"'Yeah,' he shrugged. 'Proud of nothing.'

"But I went to the Cleveland club's office all the same, and Mr. Kilfoyl and Mr. Somers were both there. I told them that I had received their card. 'You know,' I added, 'You got me into a little jam. My dad doesn't want me to be a ballplayer.'

"'Don't you worry,' said Mr. Kilfoyl 'After you sign with us and get into the Big Leagues, he'll think differently about it.'

"'Well,' I said, 'I'm not signing with you or anybody else until I hear what you're offering. I've been taken advantage of before, and it's not going to happen again. I know a lot of ballplayers and they always tell me not to sign with anybody unless I get a good salary. They all tell me you better get it when you're young, 'cause you sure won't get it when you're old.'

"'That's a lot of nonsense,' Mr. Kilfoyl said. 'Don't you worry. We'll treat you right. We'll give you a hundred dollars a month. That's a wonderful offer.'

"'I think he'll be overpaid,' Mr. Somers says.

"'I don't think that is so wonderful,' I said. 'And as for being overpaid, I get that much right now from the ice cream company, and in addition I get to eat all the ice cream I want.'"

"So it really wasn't an honorable offer," tsked Ozma. "Did they raise their offer?"

"No," replied the shadow with a sad expression. "They wouldn't increase their price. And I wouldn't reduce mine. So I left and went home. On my way home, though, I stopped in this sporting-goods store at 724 Prospect Avenue. It was owned by Bill Bradley and Ryan ... Phylli ... —I

mean, Charlie Carr. Charlie managed and played first base for Indianapolis in the American Association. Bill, as I think I may have mentioned before, played third base for Cleveland.

"Anyway, when I walked in the door, Bill Bradley said, 'Hello, Big Leaguer. I understand that the boss wants to sign you up.'

"'Not me,' I said. 'He wouldn't pay me as much as I already make with the ice cream company.'

"'You know,' said Charlie Carr, 'I manage the Indianapolis Club.'

"'I know that,' I said. After all, everybody knew that!

"'How would you like to sign with me?' Charlie said with a smile.

"'You're in the minor leagues,' I replied. 'If a major league club won't pay me what I want, how could you do it?'

"'How much do you want?' he wanted to know.

"'I took a deep breath and then answered, 'Two hundred a month.'

"'Wow!' he said. 'You want all the money, don't you?'

"'No,' I told him. 'But you want a good pitcher, don't you?'

"'Yes,' he answered simply.

"'Well, I said, 'I'm one.'"

The five Ozites laughed at this, and the shadow smiled. He was actually beginning to fear that he was giving them too many details and that his story may be becoming long-winded and dull. But seeing that he was not boring his listeners, he continued:

"He agreed to my terms, of course. So right then I signed my first professional contract, with Indianapolis of the American Association.

"When I got home that night I had to tell my dad about it, because I was to leave for Indianapolis the very next day. Oh, that was a terrible night! Finally, Dad said, 'Now listen, I've told you time and time again that I don't want you to be a professional ballplayer. But you've got your mind made up. Now I'm going to tell you something: when you cross that threshold, don't come back. I don't ever want to see you again.'"

"'No!" said Ozma with a start. "No way! No father would say such a thing to his own son!"

"That was just what my father said to me," said Rube sadly. "He didn't want me to come home again. I was excommunicated from the family."

"That's awful!" said Lisa. "Parents do have a certain responsibility toward any children that they brought into the world! He was a skinflint and a creep!"

"Yes," agreed Rube. "His actions that day were like those of a regular skunk!"

"I've known some very nice skunks in my day," said Hootsey.

"In any case," said the shadow, not wanting to get into a debate about his use of the word *skunk*, "I was as shocked as you all seem to be.

"You don't mean that, Dad!" I said.

"Yes, I do.'

"Well,' I replied. 'I'm going. And some day you'll be proud of me.'

"Proud!' he said. 'You're breaking my heart, and I don't ever want to see you again.'

"I will not break your heart,' I said. 'I'll add more years to your life. You wait and see.'

"And so it was that I went to Indianapolis. They optioned me out to Canton in the Central League for the rest of the 1907 season, and I won twenty-three games with them, which was one-third of all the games the Canton Club won that year."

"Good for you, Rube!" said Elephant, genuinely proud of his new friend.

"The next year—that would have been 1908—I went to Spring Training with the Indianapolis Club. We went to French Lick Springs, Indiana. After three weeks there we went back to Indianapolis and played a few exhibition games before the season opened. Well, believe it or not, the first club to come in for an exhibition game was the Cleveland team: Napoleon Lajoie, Terry Turner, Elmer Flick, George Stovall and the whole bunch that I used to carry bats for. When they came on the field I was already warming up.

"Hey!' a couple of them yelled at me. 'What are you doing here? Are you the bat boy here?'

"No,' I smugly replied. 'I am the pitcher.'

"You, a pitcher?' they jeered. 'Who do you think you're kidding?'

"Just ask Bill Bradley,' I told them. 'He was there when I signed my first contract. You'll see. I'm going to pitch against you guys today, and I'm going to beat you, too.'

"Beat us? Busher, you couldn't beat a drum!"

"So then Bill Bradley came over and said hello. As he was leaving he said, 'Richard, you're a nice boy, so I want to give you some advice before today's game. Be careful of the Frenchman.' He meant Napoleon Lajoie. He said, The Frenchman is very sharp and he's been hitting terrific line drives this past week. He's almost killed three of our own pitchers in practice, so there's no telling what he'll do in a real game, even if it is just an exhibition game.'

"I thanked him, of course, and went back to warming up. Well, I pitched the whole nine innings and beat them, two to zero. Lajoie got

two hits off me, and I think George Stovall got a couple, but I shut them out—and I wasn't killed, either.

"That night Charlie Carr called me over. 'You know,' he said, 'a funny thing just happened. Mr. Somers, the owner of the Cleveland club, just came over to my hotel room and wanted to buy you. He offered me three thousand five hundred dollars for your contract with the understanding that you'd stay here all season, to get more experience, and then you would join the Cleveland club next year.'

"'Charlie,' I said, 'if you sell me to Somers, I'm going right back to the ice cream company. He had first chance to get me, and he wouldn't give me what I deserved. So long as Somers is involved, I won't play for Cleveland, no matter what.'

"'Okay,' he said. 'Don't worry. I won't sell you. Later on I'll be able to sell you for a lot more, anyway.'

"On opening day, Kansas City was at Indianapolis, and I pitched the opening game. I won two to one, and that evening the story in the Indianapolis *Star* read like this: 'The American Association season opened up today, and it was a beautiful game between two fine teams. Each had great pitching, with an eighteen year old right-hander pitching for Kansas City and an eighteen year old left-hander for the home team. The right-hander with Kansas City looks like he's going to develop into a great pitcher. They call him Smoky Joe Wood. But we have a left-hander with Indianapolis who is going places, too. He resembles one of the great left-handed pitchers of all time: Rube Waddell.'

"And from that day on, they nicknamed me 'Rube.'

"I had a wonderful season that year with Indianapolis. I pitched forty-seven complete games, won twenty-eight of them, led the league in most strikeouts, least hits, most innings pitched, and everything. Occasionally what I'd do would be reported in the Cleveland papers, and friends of mine would tell me that they'd pass by the house and see Dad sitting on the porch.

"'Well, Fred,' they'd say—that was Dad's name, by the way, Fred—'Did you see what your son Rube did yesterday?'

"'Who are you talking about?' he'd say. 'Rube who?'

"'Your son—Richard,' they would answer.

"'I told him that baseball was no good,' my dad would reply. 'Now they've even gone and changed his name!'

"Anyway, I had a terrific year with Indianapolis, like I said. Late in the season we went into Columbus, Ohio, and Charlie Carr came up to me before the game.

"Rube,' he said, 'there are going to be an awful lot of celebrities here at the game today. The American and National Leagues both have an off-day, and they're all coming to see you pitch. If you pitch a good game I may be able to sell you before the night is out.'

"For how much?' I wanted to know.

"I don't know,' he said. 'But a lot. It depends on what kind of game you pitch.'

"Will you cut me in?' I asked.

"No, I won't,' he said with certainty. 'You're getting a good salary and you know it.'

"Okay,' I said. I was only kidding anyway.

"I don't want you to get nervous today,' he said.

"Nervous?' I repeated. 'Have I ever been nervous all season?'

"No,' he admitted, 'I've been in baseball a long time and I never saw anything like it. I never saw a kid like you, who can beat anybody and is so successful.'

"Well,' I said, 'the reason I'm so successful is because I can beat anybody.'"

"Now aren't you getting a little carried away with your bragging?" asked Nibbles. "I mean, I'm very much enjoying your story, even though I know little about baseball except that you play it on a bass drum. But really, I think you're carrying your pride a little too far into the negative."

"Yeah," admitted Rube, "I am sorry about that. Sometimes that happens to me when I get too worked up. Anyway, I went out there that day and I pitched one of those unusual games: no hits, no runs, no errors. Twenty-seven men faced me and not one of them got to first base. And that evening in Columbus they put me up for sale, with all the Big League clubs bidding on me, like a horse being auctioned off. The Cleveland club went as high as ten thousand five hundred dollars for my contract, but the Giants went to eleven grand, and I was sold to them. At that time, that was the highest price ever paid for a baseball player.

"I reported to the New York Giants in September of 1908, as soon as the American Association season was over. I was eigh ... "

"It still feels a little odd to have you 'remembering' things from years that have not yet been," interrupted Hootsey.

"Let him finish the story," admonished Elephant.

"I am sorry," said Rube. "But it is a memory to me, and a prediction to you. I will try to be more careful about naming years if I can remember to be. But in any event, I was eighteen years old at the time, and already

the most valuable player in the Big Leagues! Excuse me if I seem to boast, but I feel that I am justified this time. I was the hero of the hour.

"Still, I came up too late in the season to make a trip to Chicago with the Giants that year, but the next season we made our first trip to Chicago the second week in June. And the first thing I did, as soon as I got there, was to make a beeline for that firehouse.

"The only one there when I first got there was the Lieutenant. I walked up to him and said, 'Lieutenant, do you remember me?'

"'Never saw you before in my life,' he said.

"'Well, remember about three years ago you caught me sleeping back of that stove there?'

"'Oh, are you that kid from Cleveland that said he's a ballplayer?'

"'Yes!' I told him. 'Remember me? My name is Marquard. Richard Marquard.'

"'Of course,' he said, not really interested. 'What are you doing here?'

"'I am in the Big Leagues,' I explained. 'I told you when I got to the Big Leagues I was coming out to visit you.'

"'Well I'll be ... ' he began, then, 'Who are you with?'

"'Why, I'm with the New York Giants,' I said with pride.

"And boy, for years after that, whenever the Giants would come to Chicago, I'd go out to that firehouse. I'd sit out front and talk for hours. The firemen would have all the kids in the neighborhood there ... and all the families that lived around would stop by ... and it was really wonderful. Everybody was so nice and friendly. Gee, I used to enjoy that. It was a great thrill for me.

"Actually, every single day of all the years I spent in the Big Leagues was a thrill for me. It was like a dream come true. I was in the Big Leagues for eighteen years, you know, from 1908 through 192 ... Oh, yeah. Sorry about that. I was with the Giants for seven glorious years, with the Dodgers for five years after that, with Cincinnati for one year, and then with the Boston Braves for four. And I loved every single minute of it!

"The best years of all were those with the Giants. I don't mean because those were my best pitching years, although they were. In 1911 I won twenty-four games and lost only seven. And in 1912 I won twenty-six. That's the year I won nineteen straight! I didn't lose a single game in 1912 until July eighth!

"Actually, at the risk of sounding boastful again, I won twenty straight, not nineteen. But because of the way they scored then, I didn't get credit for one of them. I relieved Jeff Tesreau in the eighth inning of a

game one day, with the Giants behind, three to two. In the ninth inning, Heinie Groh singled and Art Wilson homered, and we won, four to three. But they gave Tesreau credit for the victory instead of me. Except for that it would have been twenty straight wins, not nineteen."

"It's still a pretty magnificent record," harumphed Elephant "I don't see any reason for all the sour grapes."

"Oh, no," said Rube's shadow. "No sour grapes. It was the grandest year of my life. Of course, I had other great years with the Giants, too. In 1914—er, sorry. I've just told this story this way for so long, it is hard to change it now—I beat Babe Adams and the Pirates in a twenty-one inning game, three to one. Both of us went the entire distance that day, all twenty-one innings. And the following year, I pitched a no-hitter against Brooklyn and beat Nap Rucker, two to nothing."

"No wonder you remember your years with the Giants best," said Hootsey understandingly.

"Oh, no," said Rube. "But that's not the reason. The real reason is ... Well, maybe it's because that was my first club. I don't know. Whatever the reason, though, it was wonderful to be a Giant back then.

"Take Mr. McGraw, for example. What a great man he was! The finest and grandest man I ever met! He loved his players and his players loved him. Of course, he wouldn't stand for any nonsense. You had to live up to the rules and regulations of the New York Giants, and when he laid down the law you'd better abide by it!

"I'll never forget one day we were playing Pittsburgh, and it was Red Murray's turn to bat, with the score tied in the ninth inning. There was a man on second with none out. Murray came over to McGraw—I was sitting next to McGraw on the bench—and he said, 'What do you want me to do, Mac?'

"'What do I want you to do?' McGraw said. 'What are you doing in the National League? There's the winning run on second base and no one out. What would you do if you were the manager?'

"'I'd sacrifice the man to third,' Murray said.

"'Well,' McGraw said, 'that's exactly what I want you to do.'

"So Murray went up to the plate to bunt. After he got to the batter's box, though, he backed out and looked over at McGraw again.

"McGraw poked his elbow in my ribs. 'Look at that so-and-so,' he said. 'He told me what he should do, and I told him what he should do, and now he's undecided. I'll bet he forgot from the bench to the plate.'

"Now, in those days—and I guess it's the same now—when a man was up there to bunt, the pitcher would try to keep the ball high and tight.

Well, it so happened that Red was a high-ball hitter. Howie Camnitz was pitching for Pittsburgh. He wound up and in came the ball, shoulder high. Murray took a terrific cut at it and the ball went over the left-field fence. It was a home run and the game was over.

"Back in the clubhouse, Murray was as happy as a lark. He was first into the showers, and out boomed his wonderful Irish tenor, singing *My Wild Irish Rose*. When he came out of the shower, still singing, McGraw walked over and tapped him on the shoulder. All of us were watching out of the corner of our eyes, because we knew The Little Round Man—that's what we used to call McGraw—wouldn't let this one go by without saying *something*.

"'Murray,' McGraw said. 'What did I tell you to do?'

"'You told me to bunt,' Murray said, not looking quite so happy anymore. 'But you know what happened, Mac. Camnitz put one right in my gut, so I cow-tailed it.'

"'Where did you say he put it?' asked McGraw.

"'Right in my gut,' Murray says again.

"'Well,' said McGraw, 'I'm fining you a hundred dollars, and you can try putting that right in your gut, too!' And off he went.

"'Oh, God! I never laughed so much in my life! Murray never did live that down. Years later something would happen and we'd yell to Murray, 'Hey Red, is that right in your gut?'

"There were a lot of grand guys on that club: Christy Mathewson and Chief Meyers, Larry Doyle and Fred Snodgrass, Al Bridwell and Bugs Raymond. Bugs Raymond! Ah, yes! What a terrific spitball pitcher he was. Bugs drank a lot, you know, and sometimes it seemed like the more he drank the better he pitched. They used to say that he didn't spit on the ball: he blew his breath on it, and the ball would come up drunk.

"Actually, there was very little drinking in baseball in those days. It's a shame that drinking will become more and more commonplace in American sports with the passage of time. I have seen it, and it is sad. Myself, I've never smoked or took a drink in my life. I always said you can't burn the candle at both ends. You want to be a ballplayer, be a ballplayer. If you want to go out and carouse and chase around, do that. But you can't do them both at once.

"Of course," continued Rube Marquard's shadow, 'when we were on the road, we had a nightly eleven o'clock bed check. At eleven o'clock we all had to be in our rooms and the trainer would come around and check us off. We'd usually have a whole floor in a hotel and we'd be two to a room. I always roomed with Matty all the while I was on the Giants.

What a grand guy he was! The door would be wide open at eleven o'clock and the trainer would come by with a board with all the names on it. He'd poke his head in: Mathewson, Marquard, check. And lock the door. Next room, check, lock the door.

"As far as I was concerned, I never drank a drop even when I was in show business. In 1912 I made a movie with Alice Joyce and Maurice Costello, and then I was in vaudeville for three years, Blossom Seeley and I. That's when she was my wife. It didn't work out, though. I asked her to quit the stage. I told her I could give her everything she wanted.

"No," she told me. 'Show business is show business.'

"Well," I said, 'baseball is mine.' So we parted."

"You mentioned that you were with the Giants for seven years, and then the Dodgers for five, did you not? How did it feel when you were traded from the Giants to the Dodgers?" asked Elephant.

"Well," said the shadow, "not too bad. See, I traded myself. I didn't seem to be able to get going in 1915 after I pitched that no-hitter early in April, and late in the season McGraw started riding me. That was a very bad year for the Giants, you know. We were favored to win the pennant, and instead we wound up last. So McGraw wasn't very happy. After I had taken about as much riding as I could stand, I asked him to trade me if he thought I was so bad.

"Who would take you?" he said to me.

"What do you mean?" I asked. 'I can still lick any club in the league.' And I could, too! Heck, I wasn't even twenty-six years old then.

"Lick any club in the league?" scoffed McGraw. 'You couldn't lick a postage stamp!'

"Give me a chance to trade myself, then," I suggested. 'What would you sell me for?'

"Seven thousand five hundred bills," he answered.

"Okay," I said. 'Can I use your phone?'

"Sure," he said.

"We were both pretty mad at that point, so I got hold of the operator and asked her to get me Wilbert Robinson, manager of the Brooklyn club. You see, Robbie—that's what we called him—had been a coach with us for years before he became the Dodger manager in 1914. After a while, she got Robbie on the phone.

"Hello?" he says.

"How are you, Robbie?" I asked.

"Fine," he said. 'Who is this?'

"Now, I had to handle this conversation very carefully. My whole world depended on it. 'How would you like to have a good left-handed pitcher?' I said in a jovial tone.

"I'd love it,' he said. 'Who is this? Who's the man? Who are you going to recommend?'

"I then dropped the clincher. 'I'm going to recommend myself,' I told him.

"'Who are you?' he repeated.

"'Rube Marquard,' I said, trying to sound impressive.

"'Oh,' Robbie said. 'What are you kidding around for, Rube? I have to go out on the field and I don't have time to fool around.'

"'No,' I told him, 'I'm serious! McGraw is right here and he says he'll sell me for seven thousand five hundred buckaroos! Do you want to talk to him?'

"'Of course I do,' Robbie said. And right then and there I was traded from the Giants to the Dodgers.

"And, of course, we—the Dodgers, that is—won the pennant the next year, and I had one of the best years I ever had. I think I had an earned run average of about one and a half in 1916. And then we won the pennant again in 1920. So everything worked out pretty well.

"One day when I was pitching for Brooklyn, I pitched the first game of a double-header against Boston and beat them, one to zip! I was in the clubhouse during the second game, taking off my uniform, when the clubhouse boy came in. 'Rube,' he said to me, 'there's an elderly gentleman outside who wants to see you. He says he's your father from Cleveland.'

"'He is not my father,' I said. 'My father wouldn't go across the street to see me. But you go out and get his autograph book and bring it in, and I'll autograph it for him.'

"But instead of bringing in the book, he brought in my Dad. And we were both delighted to see one another.

"'Boy,' said my father to me, 'you sure are a hardhead. You know I didn't mean what I said ten years ago.'

"'What about you, Dad?' I said. 'You're as stubborn as I am. I thought you never wanted to see me again. I thought you meant it.'

"'Of course I didn't,' he said.

"After we talked a while, I said, 'Did you see the game today?'

"'Yes,' he said, 'I did.'

"'Where were you sitting?' I asked him.

"'Well, you know the man who wears that funny thing on his face?'

"You mean the mask? The catcher?' I said.

"I guess so,' my father said with a smile. 'Well, anyway, I was halfway between him and the number one—you know, where they run right after they hit the ball?'

"You mean first base?' I asked.

"I don't know,' he said. 'I don't know what they call it. I was sitting in the middle there.'

"How many ball games have you seen since I became a ballplayer, Dad?' I wanted to know.

"This is the first one,' he said.

"Well, he stayed in New York with me for a few weeks, and we had a great time. Finally, he had to go back to Cleveland. After he'd left, the newspapers heard about my Dad and they wanted to know his address back home. So I gave it to them, and doggone if they didn't send reporters and photographers to Cleveland to interview him.

"They took his picture and asked him a lot of questions. One of the things they asked him was whether he had ever played very much baseball himself.

"Oh,' he told them, 'of course I did, when I was younger. I used to love to play baseball. I used to be a pitcher, just like my son Richard—I mean, like my son Rube.'

"Are you proud of your son?' they asked him.

"I certainly am,' Dad said. 'Why shouldn't I be? He's a great baseball player, isn't he?'"

The group of Ozites was silent for a few moments as the Forest Monster carried them along toward Yoraitia. The large pachyderm could feel a tear welling up in his left eye, and he brushed it away with his trunk.

Chapter 15

THE RESTORATION OF THE LUNECHIEN FOREST OF OZ

The little party arrived in Yoraitia in a short time. When they got there, it looked like as happy a township as any other in the Marvelous Land of Oz.

"I knew there could not be any really serious drought in our fairy-land," said Elephant happily. "After all, Oz is always pleasant and lovely. Lurliné's enchantment has always seen to that."

"I thought that Lurliné was only a character from an ancient legend," scowled the Forest Monster. "In any event, I was not created by any Fairy enchantment. I know, for I was created by two prominent Wicked Witches."

"And I was hatched out of an egg just like any other hoot-owl," replied Lisa. "But that doesn't prove anything. In any event, Glinda the Good said there was a drought happening here. But clearly she was mistaken. I don't think droughts are natural in any part of Oz, anyway."

"They aren't," agreed Ozma. "But Glinda would not have told me a lie. She must have believed there was one here."

"I think maybe she was right," said Tweaty. "Look here. I see that this tree was only watered recently. See? It looks like it has been leaning over since ... well, since at least last Tuesday at around three o'clock. Before that, I fear it was left dry for several weeks."

"Tweaty's right," agreed Nibbles. "I can see it starting to straighten up even as I look at it!"

"Then how," began Elephant, "did it ... Oh, I think I know."

"Of course!" added Lisa. "Glinda has already been here. She has already determined the source of the problem and fixed it!"

As she spoke, she noticed out of the corner of her left eye that another personage had joined the group.

"Glinda!" said Ozma, instantly recognizing the newcomer.

"Your Majesty," replied Glinda with a loving smile. "I see that you have come to see that the Yoraitians have been provided for. It was really very simple. You see, a tribe of giant polka-dot beavers had just claimed a territory a few miles up the river. It is natural for polka-dot beavers to build dams, and they had no awareness that theirs was blocking off the water supply of any inhabited towns. Once they found out, they were happy to remedy the situation. Now they are happily helping Yoraitia to better utilize its water supply. They are really very intelligent animals, and they have acknowledged you as their Queen, too."

"I am very pleased," said the youthful ruler.

"But that is not why we are here," put in Lisa quickly. "The Queen needs her Anmars. It is the only way that she can save the residents of the Lunechien Forest."

"The Lunechien Forest?" echoed the Good Witch. "Why, my goodness! What is wrong with the Lunechien Forest? The last I read of it in my Great Book of Records, it was a very happy land of elephants and unicorns and other carefree creatures."

"Indeed it was," said the Forest Monster gravely. "But I'm afraid its hardships are all my fault. In my thirst for power, I drained many of the small, unfortunate beasts of all their strengths and abilities. I have since seen the error of my ways, and I repent of my unOzlike actions. I had been so blinded by my resentment toward the Cowardly Lion that I was not even thinking about how much wickedness I was doing. The little Princess-Queen of Oz has forgiven me already. I am willing to do whatever I can to make restitution for my acts. I know that you are also a Queen and that you are one of Ozma's closest advisors. If you wish me banished from all Oz once you have restored all of my poor victims, I will accept the punishment without a murmur."

The shadow of Rube Marquard stood still and listened with a puzzled expression on his face.

Ozma looked at Glinda. "The Forest Monster really has repented," she said. "I saw the change with my own two eyes. He is willing to be restored to the size of a natural spider so that all the others can have what he took from them."

"Then it shall be done," agreed Glinda, handing Ozma the magical tool.

The Forest Monster carried the entire group—including Glinda—to the famous Ozian forest. Instantly, he and Ozma gathered up the comatose Lunechien animals and prepared to restore them to rights.

Glinda also lent a hand in the restoration process. It was not an easy task, but in only a little more than fourteen hours the lush Lunechien Forest was once again alive with the sounds of joyful birds and animals milling about among the trees and bushes.

At the end of it all, the Forest Monster was as small as a typical arachnid. Still, his tiny face was all smiles. Indeed, he was as happy as a lark that the poor animals he had wronged could be righted again. And, in fact, it has been recorded in Glinda's Great Book of Records that not a single animal was overlooked during the restoration process. All were brought back to their former care-free selves without exception. Well, maybe one exception. Somehow, in all of the hubbub, Tweaty was overlooked. He did not consider it politic to interrupt the proceedings. After all, his fellow beasts had had a far worse enchantment than he had. Of course it was uncomfortable to be a tiny orange elephant. But how much worse to be completely without oneself. He decided to wait until another time to ask to be restored. He felt that it would be too much of a selfish act to ask Ozma or Glinda to take time away from those who truly needed their help when he knew that he could stand to be a small orange elephant for a little while longer.

The reunion of the Lunechien friends and families was a cause for celebration throughout the Forest. A grand party was enjoyed by all, and even the Cowardly Lion made another trip away from home to pay his respects upon his fellow Foresters. The celebration went on 'til the wee hours of the morning, when Ozma and Glinda had to get back to their regular duties.

As for the residents of the Lunechien Forest, I am told that they are as happy today as ever they were.

The former Forest Monster, now content to stay small and keep a low profile, continues to this day to spin the most delicate and beautiful webs you can imagine. And, indeed, he did have one of his creations covered in gold, and gave it to Ozma as a sign of his submission to her rule. She keeps it hanging over her bed in such a way that it is the last thing she looks upon at night. The spider-creature has told me that it functions as a dreamcatcher, preventing any unhappy dreams from ever reaching her as she slumbers. The Sleep Fays, who once kept out these bad dreams, have voiced their gratitude to the former Forest Monster for this fine gift.

And now, it is time to say goodbye for a time to our happy friends in Oz. But do not fret. Queen Ozma is always sending us new messages from her glorious domain. I can assure you that it will not be so very long at all before we will all be getting together again over another Oz

book. Until then, both of your grateful historians wish you as much happiness as is again known in the Lunechien Forest of Oz.

**Loved this book ?
Similar users also downloaded**

Lyman Frank Baum

Rinkitink in Oz

Lyman Frank Baum

The Tin Woodman of Oz

The Tin Woodman is unexpectedly reunited with his Munchkin sweetheart Nimmie Amee from the days when he was flesh and blood.

Lyman Frank Baum

The Scarecrow of Oz

Lyman Frank Baum

The Magic of Oz

Lyman Frank Baum

The Lost Princess of Oz

Lyman Frank Baum

Glinda of Oz

Lyman Frank Baum

Tik-Tok of Oz

The fun begins in an isolated corner of Oz, in the small country of Oogaboo. There Queen Ann Soforth musters an unlikely army and sets off to conquer the rest of Oz. Meanwhile, a girl from Oklahoma named Betsy Bobbin and her companion, Hank the mule, are shipwrecked and washed ashore in the Rose Kingdom, a magical land of talking roses. There they meet the Shaggy Man, who is on a quest to rescue his brother from the clutches of the wicked Nome King. Betsy, Hank, and the Rose Princess join the Shaggy Man on his journey, and before long they meet up with Polychrome, the Rainbow's Daughter; Tik-Tok; and Queen Ann with her army. The rest of Baum's tale is filled with hairbreadth escapes, wild puns, and mystifying magic.

Robert J. Evans

Abducted to Oz

Robert J. Evans

Dorothy's Mystical Adventures in Oz

Ruth Plumly Thompson

The Royal Book of Oz

The Scarecrow decides to search for his family tree and winds up discovering that he is the long-lost Emperor of the Silver Island. Along the way, he meets such colorful characters as the A-B-Sea Serpent, the lumpy mud men, Sir Hokus of Pokes, and others.



www.feedbooks.com
Food for the mind