

Ojo In Oz – Oz 27

L. Frank Baum

by Ruth Plumly Thompson

CHAPTER 1

Gypsies!

JUST outside the western wall of the Emerald City, facing the yellow brick highway, stands a small green cottage with blue shutters. Now I suppose in any country but Oz a green cottage with blue shutters would seem odd, but in that strange and wonderful country there are so many much more strange and astonishing sights that no one finds the cottage in the least unusual. The blue shutters merely mark it as the residence of Une Nunkie, an old Munchkin nobleman, and his little nephew, Ojo. Though Uncle Nunkie has taken refuge near Ozma's capital, he never forgets that he hails from the blue country of the west, and he and Ojo still dress in the quaint blue costumes of the Munchkins and retain many of the simple and kindly customs of their own native land.

As to Oz itself, I need hardly remind you that Oz is a great, oblong, magical country divided into four triangular kingdoms, of which the blue Munchkin country forms the western triangle, the yellow Winkie country the eastern triangle, the purple land of the Gillikens the northern triangle and the red land of the Quadlings the southern triangle. In the exact center, where all of these triangles meet, is the capital of Oz where Princess Ozma, fairy ruler of all four realms, holds court and lives in her sparkling emerald palace with three little mortal girls who are

her friends, and many strange and curious celebrities who are her advisers. Who has not heard of the wonderful Wizard of Oz, of the Tin Woodman, of Tik Tok the machine man, of the Patchwork Girl, of Carter Green the Vegetable Man, of the Soldier with Green Whiskers, of the famous live Scarecrow, of Herby the Medicine Man, of the Cowardly Lion, the Hungry Tiger, the Doubtful Dromedary and the Comfortable Camel-and all the other curious and famous members of Ozma's Court? All of us, I guess, for they have made Oz known in every country in and out of the world. Yes, even in Squeedonia, which is thirty-five jumps from the jumping-off place, the little Squeedoneezers know their hoztry and their geozify by heart. But they, and even you, do not know what happened lately to Ojo in Oz, so listen carefully, for that is what I am about to tell you.

To begin with, it was one of those ratherish times, rather too late to play out of doors and rather too early for supper, so Ojo, picking up a blue fairy tale book, settled himself by the open window of the cottage to read. In the other window sat Unc Nunkie, peacefully smoking his pipe and dreaming of olden Oz times. He was just recalling with calm satisfaction a visit he had once made to the King of the

White Mountains, when a sharp clatter of hoofs on the usually deserted yellow brick highway gave him such a start that he bit off the end of his pipe and sprang clear out of his chair.

"What?" spluttered Unc Nunkie, thrusting his head out of the window. Unc, let me tell you, never used two words where one word might answer. Ojo had already flung down his book and stuck his head out of the other window. This is what he saw: Three big rickety wagons, drawn by three sleek black horses, were rolling toward the Emerald City. Copper pots and pans, brooms and kettles were tied to the wagon backs and jingled and banged tremendously as the horses trotted along. Swarthy-skinned gaudily dressed men and women rode on the drivers seats, and from windows cut in the wagons' sides bright-eyed children peered curiously out at the pleasant countryside. Behind the first wagon trotted a small dusty little donkey; several spotted dogs ran beneath the second; but to the third an enormous brown bear was fastened by a chain. To keep pace with the horse, he had to go so uncomfortably fast that Ojo could hear him pant with rage and exhaustion.

"Oh! Oh! Look, they're coming here!" screamed the boy, almost tumbling out of the window. "I never

saw wagons like that before. Who are they, Unc and where do they come from?"

"Gypsies!" choked the old Munchkin, slamming down his window and fastening the lock with a sharp snap.

"But what are gypsies?" demanded Ojo, who never his whole Oz life had seen or heard of such people. Instead of answering, Unc jerked what was left of his pipe toward the three careening wagons; then, pulling nervously at his long white beard, he strode over to Ojo's window and shut that too.

"but where do they come from, where do they go, and What do they do?" persisted his nephew, pressing his nose against the window pane. "Oh, look, they're stopping! I believe they're going to camp in that meadow over there. I believe they live in those wagons all the time and travel all over Oz like peddlers. And see, that man on the first wagon has a fiddle and that other one an accordion. Oh, Une, may I go over and watch them unpack?" With a furious shake of his head Unc Nunkie rushed out of the room. In the doorway he paused.

"Rascals!" he wheezed, wagging his white beard solemnly, and soon Ojo heard him locking windows and doors all over the house. This was certainly un-

usual, for never since they had come to live in the little green cottage had they bolted a single window or door.

"Botheration!" muttered Ojo, vexed at Unc Nunkie's strange behavior. 'Why all this fuss over a few travelers? They look just like other people, only gayer.'" With lively curiosity he watched the children tumbling out of the carts, the men unharnessing the horses and starting to gather wood for fires. The bear's chain was padlocked around a huge oak and he immediately began to rub his back up and down the bark, grumbling and scolding to himself in such a comical way that Ojo burst out laughing. He was so busy watching the gypsies that he did not know Unc Nunkie had come back until he felt himself seized by both shoulders. Turning him away from the window, Unc looked earnestly down into his eyes.

"Not!" cautioned the old gentleman, shaking his long finger under Ojo's nose. Then without waiting for Ojo to answer he was off again. This time Ojo heard the door slam, and running to the back window saw Unc Nunkie determinedly marching down the garden path. At the end of the garden was the great green wall of the Emerald City and in the wall was a small door leading directly into the royal park

of Ozma's castle.

"I suppose he is going to tell Ozma that gypsies are camped outside the city walls. And I suppose he means I am not to go out of the house," sighed Ojo regretfully. "What harm is there in that? Oh, well," he concluded sensibly, "I can still look out of the widow." So, seating himself in Unc Nunkie's great arm chair, he rested his elbows on the sill and with growing interest and excitement watched the gypsies preparing their camp for the night.

The men had already started the fire. An immense iron pot on a huge iron crane was swinging over the flames and while the women hurried back and forth between the wagons and the cauldron, preparing what appeared to be an enormous stew, the gypsy man with the fiddle lolled against a convenient boulder and struck up a wild and lilting melody. The ragged, black-eyed children began to skip and hop about the fire and, to Ojo's delight and amazement, the bear stopped scratching his back and, raising up on his hind legs waltzed gravely and gracefully to and fro, holding up his chain so that he would not trip over it. One of the older girls and one of the boys snatched castanets from their pockets and joined in the dance, leaping, springing and gesturing

so merrily that Ojo's feet began to tap the floor. The castanets, now high, now low, seemed to be really talking, laughing, teasing, daring him to come across the road and join in the fun. It was all so different and jolly that Ojo, without half realizing it, found himself at the front door.

"I'll just open it a little bit so I can hear the music better," thought Ojo to himself. He honestly meant to follow Unc Nunkie's instructions, but no sooner had he stuck his nose outside the door than one of the gypsy women beckoned to him coaxingly. She had an empty water bucket in her hands and Ojo, feeling that even Unc Nunkie would not want anyone to go thirsty, ran across the road, seized the bucket and in a jiffy returned it, full to the brim.

"Thank you! Thank you!" smiled the woman, showing a double row of sparkling white teeth. She was young and handsome in a bold and dark-eyed fashion, with flying black curls and enormous hooped earrings. She wore a bright red handkerchief on her head, a full yellow skirt, a black velvet jacket and so many bracelets that Ojo could not even count them. As she turned back to the fire a wrinkled old crone came hurrying toward him.

"How would the young gentleman like to know his fortune?" inquired the old gypsy, sidling up to Ojo

like a crab. "Let Noma read your palm," she wheedled coaxingly. "Know all the secrets of the past and future!"

Ojo looked doubtfully across the road, for he had left the door of the cottage wide open. Then, as the old woman continued to mumble and mutter, his curiosity got the better of his judgment and thrusting out his hand he begged her to go ahead. "Not here! Not here!" grunted Noma, holding him fast by the wrist "Come to my wagon. There it is quiet, and no one will hear us." The fiddler had stopped playing and was looking fixedly at Ojo and, as the tattered gypsy children crowded round the little Munchkin, the brown bear began to growl and roar and jerk at his chain.

"Be off!" he screamed crossly. "Be off, you little idiot! Here are thieves, robbers, cutthroats, villains!"

A crack over the head with a piece of blazing firewood silenced the valiant bear and Ojo, who was by this time quite ready and anxious to take to his heels, found himself being drawn quickly toward the farthest of the wagons. In spite of her great age, Noma was as strong and stubborn as a donkey.

"Oh, well," thought Ojo, too proud to struggle and let the gypsy children see that he could not escape

from the determined old woman, "as soon as my fortune is told, I'll slip off and be home before Uncle misses me."

Roughly constructed steps had been let down from the wagons, and up the steps of the last one the old gypsy pushed Ojo. Inside, it was like a small one-room house and, though he was anxious and troubled, the boy could not help thinking how grand it must be to rove all over Oz in this gay and carefree fashion. He had even lost some of his nervousness, for Noma had dropped his hand. Lighting a lantern suspended by a long chain from the top of the wagon, she motioned for him to sit down. This he did on a three-legged stool. First drawing the curtains at the back of the wagon, Noma seated herself on a stool opposite Ojo and, taking his hand in her own, looked craftily up into his face.

"What does the young gentleman call himself?" she demanded inquisitively. Reflecting that he never called himself at all, the Munchkin boy stated with a smile that his name was Ojo. His answer had a most amazing effect on the old woman. Springing up with a scream, she bounded out the back of the cart and began shouting to the others in harsh nasal squeals. Ojo could not understand what she was screaming, for she was using the strange and unfa-

miliar tongue of the gypsies. But he was thoroughly alarmed and thinking this a good time to escape he dashed to the front of the wagon, climbed over the seat and jumped between the empty shafts. However, this only plumped him in the center of the crowd of gypsy children who had gathered round the wagon determined to hear Ojo's fortune and get something for themselves if possible.

There were perhaps a dozen of the little rascals and although Ojo could fight as well as any other lad of ten, he was hopelessly outnumbered. The largest of the boys tore all the gold buttons from his coat, the smallest cut off his gold shoe buckles with a sharp knife. One of the girls snatched his white ruffed collar, another seized his hat, stripped off all the gold bells trimming its edges and jammed it savagely down over his nose.

Dragging at his hat with one hand, Ojo struck out manfully with the other, just managing to keep his feet. But his coat was soon torn to ribbons, and he himself would have fared badly indeed, had not the gypsy man with the fiddle rushed forward and cuffing the children right and left grabbed Ojo by the shoulder. Ojo had been so busy defending himself that he had not noticed the sudden tumult and con-

fusion in the gypsy camp. Now, as he was jerked unceremoniously toward the second wagon, he saw with sinking heart that the gypsies were stamping out the fire, backing the horses between the shafts, tossing their belongings hurriedly back into the carts, screaming at the children, and showing every indication of immediate departure.

Flung like a sack of potatoes into the wagon, Ojo had just time to roll over and sit up, when the great brown bear was driven up the steps and shoved through the curtains. The steps were flung violently after him. Through the curtains hung across the front of the wagon Ojo could see two figures already on the seat, and as the bear, grumbling and scolding and rattling his chain, settled down opposite him, the gypsy driver stood up and snapped his long whip. The wagon gave a great lurch and at breakneck speed went careening over the uneven meadow toward the yellow brick highway. From the noise and rattle behind them, Ojo knew the other wagons were following, and almost too startled and horrified to speak he stared wildly across at his dangerous looking travelling mate.

"Well!" snarled the bear, snapping his little eyes temperishly. "You can't say I didn't warn you, little soft head! Why didn't you run?"

Now most of you would think it surprising to hear a bear talk, but in Oz all the animals talk as easily and fluently as the people, so that Ojo was not surprised at the bear's speech - only terribly depressed. For of course the bear was right. Why in jiggeration had he not run at the creature's first outcry? Why had he not minded Unc Nunkie and stayed peacefully at home?

"A fine fix you're in now, went on the bear, raising his voice as they swayed and rattled down the yellow brick highway. "A fine fix!" Running his paw around his collar, which seemed to be tight and uncomfortable, he blinked mournfully over at Ojo.

"How about yourself?" retorted the boy, too miserable to care whether he offended the bear or not.

"They seem to have caught you, too!"

"Humph! Hemph! Kerumpf!" muttered the great beast, looking sharply at Ojo. "That was long ago, my boy. Well, we all make mistakes," he added unhappily, "and I had no one to warn me of gypsies. Blackenblueberries! What a life it's been, dancing and begging at fairs at the beck and call of these good-for-nothing villains! Never a moment's liberty nor enough to eat. Nothing but blows and ill treatment in payment for faithful service. The bear's

appearance certainly bore out his sorrowful story,
for under his fur Ojo could see every one of his ribs.

"But what do they want with me?" gasped the boy,
terrified a~uch a prospect. "I cannot dance and I
have nothing to give them-now." Turning out his
pockets and thumping his torn coat and blouse, Ojo
looked forlornly across at the bear.

"Come here," whispered the bear mysteriously, and
as Ojo crawled cautiously over beside him he reached
out his huge brown paw. "Take off your hat," he di-
rected eagerly.

"But why?" Ojo dragged the hat upwards with
both hands, for it was still wedged down over his ears.

"Why?" he repeated, pulling it off with a little angry
jerk.

"Because," with a cautious glance at the shadowy
figures on the driver's seat, the bear leaned down so
he could speak directly into Ojo's ear, "because there
is a price on your head!" he confided darkly. "Here,
let me see!"

CHAPTER 2

Snufferbux, the Bear

"A PRICE on my head?" gasped Ojo, almost too astonished to believe his own ears.

"It's not there now," mumbled the bear in a disappointed voice, after running his paw carefully all over Ojo's tousled black hair. "But I distinctly heard Zithero say there was a price on your head, and they came all the way to the Emerald City with the express purpose of stealing a Munchkin boy named Ojo."

"That's me, all right!" groaned Ojo dolefully. "And the price wouldn't have to be marked on my head. It just means that somebody is willing to pay the gypsies a great deal of money for me," he explained solemnly, for Ojo had read enough stories to know something about such matters. "But I can't see why anybody would want me," he continued hoarsely. "I'm not rich or important or anybody at all!" The ease with which the gypsies had seized and carried him off made Ojo feel exceedingly small and insignificant.

"There, there! You seem real important to me," murmured the bear consolingly, and putting a huge arm around Ojo he drew him close to his shaggy fur. Snuggling gratefully against him the boy felt somewhat reassured and comforted.

"Couldn't we jump out the back?" he suggested worriedly.

"And be crushed by the next wagon? No use!" sighed the bear. "They'd only catch and starve us for a week. I've tried it again and again, but I'll help you all I can," he promised gruffly.

"And I'll help you, too," said Ojo, trying to speak bravely. The long Oz twilight was fast drawing to a close. Soon it would be dark and already the air had grown sharp and penetrating. Moving closer to the kindly bear, Ojo, as the gypsy wagon carried him farther and farther from friends and safety, wondered what unknown dangers and experiences were in store for him. He could well imagine Unc Nunkie's fright and anxiety when he returned to find the little cottage empty and the gypsies gone. He could not help thinking longingly of the chicken pie and chocolate pudding they had planned for supper.

"Hungry?" growled the bear, almost as if he had guessed Ojo's thoughts. Reaching in a leathern pouch strapped around his waist he brought out two small apples and a stale bun. "A little girl gave me these at noontime. Better than nothing," he grunted cheerfully. He tried to give them all to Ojo, but Ojo insisted on dividing the bun and taking the smallest apple.

"What do they call you?" he asked presently, musing away thoughtfully. "Since we are to be friends I ought to know your name."

"These rascals call me 'Rufus,' but my real name," answered the bear, straightening up proudly, "is Snufforious, Buxorious, Blundorious Boroso!"

"My!" Ojo swallowed with difficulty, for the bun was stale and dry as sawdust. "I'm afraid I couldn't remember all that, Snufforious, Buxoroh, I say, do you mind if I call you Snufferbux, as a sort of nickname?"

"Well," the bear sounded a bit dubious, "it doesn't sound very dignified, but then there is nothing dignified about a fellow who spends his life dancing attendance at the end of a chain. Go ahead, call me anything you like," he finished dejectedly.

"I think it's a jolly name," decided Ojo, "and maybe before long I can break that chain or get a knife and cut off that collar and then

"Then I wouldn't care what you called me," exclaimed Snufferbux, giving Ojo a quick hug. "But be careful, my boy," he cautioned, lowering his voice.

"Do nothing to arouse the temper of these gypsies. They are terrible fellows, especially Zithero, the leader. Keep on the good side of Zithero or you'll

be black and blue," he predicted gloomily. It was too dark even to distinguish the figures on the driver's seat, and with a little shudder Ojo crept closer to Snuffer's warm coat and right in the middle of worrying and wondering about his probable fate, fell into a sound slumber.

When he awakened everything was still. Snuffer-bux was asleep on the floor of the wagon, his head on one arm, his other thrown protectingly around Oso. The wagon had stopped and the gypsies on the seat were asleep, too, slumped wearily down in their places. Slipping noiselessly from the bear's embrace, Ojo parted the curtains at the back of the wagon and peered out. In the grey light of early morning, he saw a great blue and unfamiliar forest. How the gypsies had managed to drive through the dense underbrush and between the gnarled old trees Ojo could not imagine, but here they were, all three wagons drawn up side by side in a gloomy clearing. The horses dozed heavily between the shafts; the little donkey was stretched out full length under a tree and there was not anywhere a sign of life or motion. But the momentary hope Ojo had of escaping was immediately dashed, for as he swung one leg over the back of the cart, one of the spotted dogs awoke and began to bark furiously. Stepping back

as quietly as possible, Ojo again lay down beside Snufferbux and closed his eyes, so that when Zithero, roused by the dog, pulled aside the curtains, the boy was apparently fast asleep. Through half closed lids he watched the gypsy leader rub his eyes and crossly nudge the young woman beside him. Swinging down into the wagon he kicked Snuffer savagely, jerked Ojo to his feet and began calling out gruff orders to the rest of the band.

Slowly and grumpily the gypsies arose, yawning and scolding and descended from their four-wheeled homes. The children, who had all been crowded into one of the wagons, began half-heartedly to collect firewood. Zithero, with a quick shove, propelled Ojo roughly toward them.

"Get busy, Ojo, or Slowjo, or whatever they call you," rasped the leader impatiently. "All who eat must work. And mind, now, no running off, or-" Touching the bright scimiter run through his scarlet belt Zithero snapped his black eyes warningly at Ojo, and Ojo hurriedly but most unwillingly joined the gypsy children. They gave him no trouble this morning, evidently having received orders from the chief, but they chattered spitefully together in their own tongue and made such awful faces at him when no

one was looking that Ojo felt miserably out of place and heartsick. The women were warming up the stew they had prepared for dinner the night before. Snuffer, fastened to a stake driven in the ground, had been given a bowl of onions to peel. With tears pouring down both cheeks he nodded encouragingly at Ojo, and though the boy did not feel at all like smiling, he could not help himself.

Poking about among the damp leaves in search of twigs and small branches, he tried to plan some-way out of his dreadful difficulties. Should he speak up boldly and demand his freedom, or wait for a lucky chance to escape. If he waited too long the gypsies would certainly turn him over to the unknown person who had offered the reward for his capture. Who could have done such a thing and why did they want him? With all of these questions buzzing round and round in his head, Ojo leaned down to pick up a piece of birch bark when a gleaming metal object caught his attention. Glancing over his shoulder to see that none of the children were watching him, he quickly snatched it up. It was a small, finely made silver whistle, and thrusting it into his pocket Ojo carried his bundle of wood to the fire.

"Ha, ha! And how does the young gentleman like gypsying?" grinned Noma, who was stirring the

great black cauldron with a huge ladle. "Nothing like life in the open, eh?"

"Oh, a gypsy's life is gay and free~

He knows no law, no law knows he;

The wide world is his hearth and home!

The open road is his to roam;

And what he needs he takes for aye,

And lets the stupid townsman pay!"

croaked the old woman, keeping time with her ladle and leering through the steam like a mischievous goblin.

"But I don't see why you took me," said Ojo, sitting down on a fallen log and trying to speak calmly. Maybe, if he were very careful and polite, Noma might tell him something useful. But the old hag only gave an irritating screech of laughter.

"We took you for a good reason, a reason you'll know soon enough. Ha, ha! What a surprise is in store for you." Ojo had a distinct feeling from Noma's expression that the surprise was going to be extremely unpleasant, and throwing caution to the winds he jumped angrily to his feet.

"You had better let me go, or Princess Ozma will

see that you are punished. She is a fairy and a friend of mine and ruler of all Oz. She will send Une Nunkie and the army to find me and-

"No one finds the gypsies," squealed Noma, hopping gleefully around the cauldron. "Let them try! Let them try!"

"Here, here, what's all this?" Striding up to the fire, Zithero spun Ojo round by the shoulder. "Didn't I tell you to get to work? Quick now, off with you!" He gave Ojo a stinging blow on the ear that sent him sprawling among the gypsy children. Tears started to his eyes, but not for anything in Oz would he have made an outcry. Picking himself up slowly and paying no attention to the jeers and taunts of the ragged little gypsies, Ojo went on grimly and quietly gathering twigs. He didn't look at Snuffer, but could hear the bear snarling and growling, and as an onion flew past his head and caught Noma squarely on the nose, he felt a little cheered and comforted. Whatever happened, decided Ojo, he would never desert the big brown bear.

Soon after this, Zinaro, wife of Zithero, called all of them to come and eat. She was the one to whom Ojo had brought the pail of water and as she handed him a heaping plate of stew with a piece of yellow gypsy bread on the side, she smiled almost kindly

at the forlorn boy. "Oh, maybe she will help me!" thought Ojo, who by this time was ready to grasp at any straw. The stew, though hot and peppery, put new life into the little Munchkin and when he had finished he diplomatically began to help Zinaro wash the tin plates in a little forest stream, thinking all the while how he could best go about enlisting her sympathy.

As Ojo dipped the third plate into the sparkling water he happened to glance across the stream itself. Gingeration! Merciful Munchkins! Behind every great blue tree on the other side stood a giant huntsman! But come now, were they huntsmen? Ojo, trembling in both knees, took a second look. Huntsmen, never! They were robbers, brigands, bandits, outlaws. The very tilt of their feathered hats proclaimed their trade. And if that weren't enough, each stout rosy-cheeked rascal was armed with a long sword, a short sword, a bilbo (which I must tell you is a curious kind of rapier) a brace of pistols and a hickory club.

The tin plate slid out of Ojo's fingers, but as he jumped up to give the alarm the bandit nearest the water's edge put his fingers to his lips and gave Ojo such a merry wink that the boy stopped in spite of

himself. After all, why should he warn the gypsies?

They were cruel and heartless and his sworn enemies. Zinaro had her back to the stream and all the other members of the band were still gathered round the fire. So, closing his mouth stubbornly, Ojo dropped to his knees, picked up a tin cup and began nervously sloshing it up and down in the water. What would happen next? Would they all be robbed and captured? Might it not be possible in the general confusion for Snufferbux and him to slip away?

Now, with muffled thuds and splashes, the robbers were crossing the stream. A bright gold ring with a sparkling yellow stone fell with a resounding clink into Ojo's cup. For a moment a heavy hand rested on his shoulder. Looking up fearfully, he met the blazing blue eyes of the bandit chief. Was the fellow thanking him, or was he in as great danger as the others? Before Ojo could decide, the outlaws, with yells, shouts and ear-splitting screeches, rushed to the fire and fell upon the gypsies. Without waiting to see how it would end, Ojo sprinted toward Snuffer's post. Seizing the heavy chain he pulled, struggled, and tugged with all his might. The brown bear helped him so valiantly that between them they had loosened the pole, when a hefty bandit grasped Ojo round the middle, and plucking up the pole as if it

had been a daisy, dragged them boisterously along to the fire.

Trussed up like pigs on market day, Zithero and his band were ranged in a neat row between two trees. Ojo was relieved to see that none of them had been injured, and as they kicked and struggled and called out dire threats and abuse he could not help feeling that they had got exactly what they deserved. The robber chief was calmly ladling out what was left of the stew to his men, and as Ojo was dumped roughly on the ground beside him he gave a little chuckle of recognition and pleasure.

"Not too rough there, Tiny!" he cautioned, as a huge bandit wound a rope round and round Ojo and then similarly bound up Snuffer. "This boy is a friend of mine. Isn't that so, little fellow?" Ojo was too breathless to answer, but Snuffer, snarling and growling, spoke for him.

"A fine way to treat a friend," raged the bear, gritting his teeth in helpless fury. "When I get loose from here I'll tear you into a hundred pieces and throw the pieces away."

"Really!" roared the bandit, staring at Snuffer with both hands on his hips. "D'ye think I'd make that many?"

"I see the pot is empty. How about roasting the bear, Realbad?" boomed Tiny, making a sudden lunge at Snuffer.

"Bear for breakfast!" exclaimed Realbad in mock horror. "How distressing, how repelling! You know I never eat bear for breakfast. But he'll make a splendid rug for the family cave. Now then, boys, fall to, and when we're finished we'll see how many gold pieces we can shake out of these villains." Moving closer to Snuffer, who had turned pale under his fur at the robber's words, Ojo cast curious side long glances up at Realbad as he downed the gypsies' stew with evident relish. In spite of his threats, Ojo could not help having a feeling of friendliness for the high and handsome outlaw. He seemed utterly unlike the other members of his burly robber band, and in his rough suit of blue leather, his great boots and feathered hat, he looked more distinguished than the finest gentlemen at Ozina's court.

"It's the way he stands," decided Ojo, straightening up under the ropes pinioning his arms to his side. He had immediately slipped Realbad's ring on his finger and looking down at it anxiously he wondered whether he was going to be safer with the bandits than with the gypsies.

"We go from bad to worse!" groaned Snuffer de-

spondently, as Realbad, finished at last with his breakfast, bade his men bring the captives nearer the fire.

"Watch closely there, little splinter!" he called with a good-natured grin at Ojo. "Watch closely and see how we bandits work, for 'pon my sword hilt, I'm minded to make a bandit of you! A bad business, you think? But wait till you've tried it. Ho, "I'm Realbad, the bandit, and real bad am I, And I'll have what I want in the wink of an eye!" he shouted, slapping his sword gaily against his boot.

Fascinated, Ojo watched the robbers at work. One at a time the gypsies were dragged forward, untied, thoroughly searched and shaken, and securely bound up again. Soon a heap of bracelets, rings, copper coins and other odds and ends which the gypsies had stolen in the course of their wanderings, lay at Realbad's feet. The women and children were not molested, and as Realbad himself went methodically through the pockets of Zithero the rest of the robbers went off to investigate the wagons. Zithero's short coat and sash were lined with gold pieces and as they fell ringing to the ground he snarled and snapped like a dog. But calmly and unhurriedly Realbad con-

tinued his search. In an inner pocket of the gypsy leader's blouse he found a small folded piece of parchment. Holding the squirming rascal in one hand he flipped open the parchment with the other. Ojo saw his eyes snap and kindle with excitement as he read.

"Slayrum! Boldoso! Tiny!" roared the bandit, waving Zithero as if he were a flag. "Come here! Come back! Quickly!" When the three bandits arrived panting at the fire in answer to his booming summons, he triumphantly held up the parchment, reading it out to them in a high, jubilant voice:

"Whoever brings the boy, Qjo, to Moojer Mountain within twenty moons shall receive five thousand bags of sapphires. No questions asked or answered."

"Leave all this trash!" commanded Realbad, giving the heap at his feet an impatient kick. "Here is our real booty!" He swept his arm in the direction of Ojo. "This is no gypsy. This is Ojo. Boy, you have brought me luck! The gypsies have stolen you hoping for the reward. But now we have you and shall collect it ourselves. Put the treasure in the sack, Tiny, and let us away to this Moojer Mountain.

"What treasure?" asked Tiny, blinking his eyes stupidly, for he had only understood half of what he had heard.

"The boy, dumbhead, the boy!" roared Realbad.

"He is our treasure, good as gold, only better. Five thousand bags of sapphires. What a day's work this is!"

"I won't come! I won't come !" screamed Ojo, kicking out furiously as Slayrum started to lift him into the great sack hanging from Tiny's broad shoulders. But even as he screamed, he was tumbled headlong into the dark leather bag and fell choking and sobbing to the bottom. Then, more gently, he 'felt himself drawn upward and his head was pulled through the opening at the top of the sack.

"Well, well! I thought you were a brave fellow," whispered Realbad, wiping Ojo's tears on his own fine handkerchief. "Come, come! A boy worth five thousand sacks of sapphires need not cry about anything." Fastening the string of the sack gently about Ojo's shoulders, Realbad gave him a hearty slap on the back and turned quickly to his men.

"Come! Come, all of you! Bring the bear, Slayrum," he commanded gruffly. Then sweeping off his hat, Realbad bowed mockingly to the gypsies. "Farewell, gentlemen!" he called gaily. "Gentlemen, farewell!"

Leaping easily across the small brook he started

swiftly off through the blue forest, followed closely

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by Tiny with Ojo in the sack, Slayrum dragging

Snuffer by his chain, and the three and twenty other

grinning and perspiring outlaws.

CHAPTER 3

In the Bandits' Cave

AS Ojo bumped up and down in the sack on Tiny's shoulder, he tried to collect his scattered wits and summon back his courage. Where was this Moojer Mountain, and who had offered this immense reward for his capture? He was bitterly disappointed in Realbad, for at first he had felt that the handsome outlaw was his friend. If he had only not found that miserable parchment offering the bags of jewels, the robber chief might really have let him join the band. Life in the blue forest would have been exciting and new, and what tales he could have carried back to Unc Nunkie and his friends in the Emerald City! Now everything was ruined, he would be taken to Moojer Mountain and dumped down like merchandise for five thousand sacks of treasure. But why should

anyone pay that much for a simple, unimportant little Munchkin? Try as he would Ojo could not understand it and as the mystery soon made his head ache he gave it up for the time being and looked sharply to the right and left for signs or landmarks in case he should be able to escape.

The forest was old and beautiful. Now and then a rabbit would scurry across their path or a deer look inquisitively out through the shadowy tree trunks. In the branches overhead, bluejays and other birds kept up an incessant chatter, and the bandits, as they trudged along, bawled out so cheery a song that it was difficult to believe they were really such villains. Prodded by Boldoso and jerked along by Slayrum, Snufferbux shuffled unwillingly at the end of his chain, letting out from time to time heart-rending growls and roars. Several times answering roars came back, as if some of the four-footed forest folk saw and sympathized with his predicament but were too afraid of the robbers' guns to come to his assistance. After an hour's tramp, the forest grew less dense, great rocky clearings made their appearance, and Ojo noticed that the rocks were marked with strange blue crosses and figures. Hurrying across the third clearing, the bandits made their way toward

a huge tumble of impassable boulders. Ojo, squinting over Tiny's shoulder, could see no break or pass in the slaty barrier, yet Realbad had already disappeared and, next thing, Tiny himself had stepped around a great jutting rock and started gaily down a stone passageway. The passage went down and then up, coming out at last into an immense and rugged cavern. Open to the sky on one end, protected by its blue crystal roof on the other, it was as snug and comfortable a hide-away as the heart of a woodsman could wish for.

A long, rough table of logs ran down the center, with log benches on either side for the bandits. Bear-skin rugs were spread over the polished stone floors; the heads of deer, elk and other large animals proved the robbers to be doughty hunters. An enormous stone fireplace took up one entire end of the cave and along the edges were ranged long chests evidently containing the clothes and booty of the bandits. With a huge yawn and stretch, Realbad unstrapped his gun and let it slide to the floor, and leaning forward set fire to the logs.

"Well, Chief, shall I lock up the treasure?" grunted Tiny, swinging the sack and Ojo down to the hearth.

"That depends," murmured Realbad, blowing up the flames with a huge bellows.

"Brr-rah! Brr-ruh!" rumbled Snufferbux threateningly, as he was pushed and prodded into the cave.

"Bear! Bear!" Realbad jumped up clapping both hands to his ears. "Do me a favor, won't you? Stop roaring with anger till you've something to be angry about. It's a sheer waste of savagery."

"Well, do you expect me to roar with laughter at the prospect of becoming a rug?" snarled Snuffer, rolling his eyes wildly. "Do you expect me to stand around and grin while this poor child is locked up in a chest -- or worse?"

"Never worry about a thing until it happens?" advised Realbad, snapping his fingers under Snuffer's nose. "We've all had a long march, let's sit down and rest and talk matters over. Now, as to the treasure, let us see!" Jerking Ojo from the sack, Realbad set him not ungently on the floor. "Shall I lock you up, or will you give me your word of honor not to run away?"

"Why shouldn't I run away?" demanded Ojo, in a somewhat shaky but nevertheless determined voice.

"You are holding me against my will and intend to exchange me for five thousand sacks of sapphires.

Why shouldn't I try to escape if I can?"

"Why, indeed?" agreed Realbad, rubbing his hands

together with evident enjoyment. "Well," he continued jovially, "I'll tell you why. It will be pleasanter if you don't, for one thing. Just promise not to run off and you shall sit by the fire, eat, rest and be merry. Of course, if you prefer to lie at the bottom of a dark chest, that is your own affair."

"Promise nothing," growled Snuffer warningly.

Ojo looked from one to the other, hardly knowing what to say. Then, as Tiny made a quick grab for him, he moved closer to Realbad.

"All right, I promise," he said stiffly.

"Good, let's shake on it." Realbad had to bend almost double to reach Ojo's hand. "And I promise no harm shall come to you while you are in this cave," he said, straightening up with his flashing smile.

"How about Snufferbux?" asked Ojo anxiously.

"So that's what you call him?" Realbad looked long and mischievously at the great bear. "Well, he's too thin for steak, and too moth-eaten for rugs so I suppose we'll have to let him live. Can you do anything unusual or interesting, old Growler?"

"I can waltz," answered Snuffer ill-naturedly. "I can play the accordion, hold a tin cup and beg and I can wrestle and hug you to death if you come too near me," finished the bear, blinking his small eyes

savagely at Realbad.

"Splendid material for an outlaw," murmured the bandit, pushing back his feathered hat. "We'll certainly have to take you in, old Hugger. Throw over that accordion, Smackeback and let's have a tune!" Smackeback, grinning broadly, turned over the accordion he had stolen from the gypsies. Snuffer caught it easily and sat down on a wooden bench by the fire. Then, still eyeing the whole company suspiciously, he began to play, bringing such gusts of rhythm and melody from the ancient instrument that the robbers stopped where they stood and stamped and shouted with approval. Ojo, climbing up beside him, felt unaccountably happy and light-hearted. For the present his comfort and safety were assured, and who knew what might occur before the robbers reached Moojer Mountain? So, kicking his feet unconcernedly in time to the accordion, he sniffed with keen appetite the great side of venison browning on the turnspit over the fire. Slayrum had already set the table with heavy plates, mugs, knives, forks and spoons and hopping heavily around to the swing of Snuffer's music, the outlaws prepared to enjoy themselves.

Seated at the head of the table beside Realbad, with

Snuffer on his right, the boy had the first care-free moment since the gypsies had carried him away. The bandits' meat was tender, the bandits' bread was fresh. There were wild berries and nuts for dessert and brown sparkling root beer that made Ojo's nose tingle. Realbad, noticing the tightness of Snuffer's collar, cut it off with his hunting knife and the big bear, like Ojo, found himself growing more and more at ease and content. It was the only time in years the poor fellow had had enough to eat, and after downing twenty loaves of bread, three bowls of berries and a small barrel of root beer, he thankfully tapped his bulging middle and began to look more amiably at the robbers.

"Come, what's on your mind, old Serious?" asked Realbad, catching one of Snuffer's earnest glances.

"Tell us something about yourself, how you came into the hands of the gypsies and all that."

"Yes, give us the bare facts," yawned Tiny, leaning both elbows on the table and resting his chin in his huge palms. "Are you kind to little fish and children, are you pleasant or unpleasant and-"

"Unpleasant," answered Snuffer promptly, and beginning to enjoy himself immensely. "I awaken every morning with a snarl and retire every evening with a growl."

"And between times?" asked Tiny, with another yawn.

"Oh, judge for yourself," said Snuffer gruffly, "but let me tell you one thing, never cross a bear. A crossed bear is a cross bear and beware of him." Paying no attention to the mirth of the outlaws, Snuffer went calmly on with his recital.

"I am, as you have probably noticed, a plantigrade, carnivorous animal, though I much prefer fruit, vegetables, fish and honey."

"Well, that lets me out," roared Slayrum, setting down his mug and wiping his mouth carelessly on his sleeve. "Fish! Ha, ha! Honey! Ho, ho!"

"It was my taste for honey that proved my undoing," went on Snuffer, rolling his eyes solemnly around at Realbad. "Five years ago, coming down from the mountains for a little change of scene and diet, I happened upon a gypsy encampment. At that time I knew nothing of gypsies, and as the camp seemed deserted I looked around to see whether they had left anything good to eat. Near one of the wagons there was a large pail of honey. Putting my head in the pail to sample the honey, I suddenly received a blow from behind that jammed my ears down into the pail. While in this unfortunate posi-

tion and blinded by the sticky stuff, I was soon overpowered and tied fast to a tree. During the winter that followed, Zithero, the leader of the gypsies, taught me to dance, hold out a tin cup, and other tricks unbecoming to one of my size and dignity. In the spring we started out and traveled up and down Oz, begging at country fairs, stealing, peddling and living the miserable lives of outcasts. Half fed and cruelly beaten I have for five years existed as a wretched captive, with not even time out or one opportunity to lie dormant." Snuffer's voice cracked and broke at the memory of his wrongs.

"What savagery," murmured Tiny, winking across the table at Ojo, "What savagery! Ho, hu'm,! I'd like to lie dormant myself for a couple of centuries."

"See here, why not stay with us?" proposed Realbad generously. "We will let you lie dormant once a year and make a real bandit of you. Snuffer the Bandit Bear of Oz, how does that sound, comrades?"

"Ha, ha! A robber bear. Ho, ho! But remember, you can't make this year's lily out of last year's rose."

As the bandits laughed at Tiny's sally, Snuffer cleared his throat and looked thoughtfully into the empty root beer keg.

"I would rather go free and take Ojo back to the Emerald City," he announced boldly.

"What! Take our treasure?" exclaimed Realbad, flinging his arm around the little Munchkin. "Why, you can't do that, and since Ojo has brought us such luck and good fortune, let Ojo tell his story. I, for one, would like to know why he is worth his weight in jewels."

"Yes! Yes! Speak up and tell us all," shouted the robbers, thumping on the table with their knives.

"Better begin at the middle," advised Tiny, who was growing dreadfully sleepy. "Begin at the middle and leave out all dates, all favorite uncles and aunts, stone bruises, fish you have caught, all pet turtles, guinea pigs, white mice, puppies and don't bother about Christmas and birthday presents!"

"I was not going to!" said Ojo, springing up indignantly.

"There, there, little splinter, don't mind him," murmured Realbad soothingly. "Begin where you want and stop where you wish."

"Well," began Ojo in a serious voice. "For as long as I can remember I have lived with Unc Nunkie in a small house in the middle of a forest."

"Didn't this Unc Monkey have a name?" asked Slayrum, with a malicious leer.

"Nunkie," corrected Ojo severely, "and I never

heard any other name, though some call him the silent one, for Unc never talks if he can possibly help it."

"What fun!" commented Smackeback. "How cheery! What a life for you!"

"It was pretty lonely," admitted Ojo thoughtfully.

"But one day, when our bread tree stopped blooming and there was no more to eat, we left the little house in the forest and started out to find some other place to live. The first place we came to belonged to Dr. Pipt, the crooked magician, who lived on a mountain on the other side of the forest. When we reached the house, Dr. Pipt's wife, Margolotte invited us in, gave us a fine dinner and showed us a Patchwork Girl she had made out of an old quilt and stuffed with cotton. The magician himself was busy making a new batch of the Powder of Life. He wanted to make the Patchwork Girl live so she could be a servant for his wife. As the powder was almost finished, he begged us to stay and watch him do it."

"And how did it work?" inquired Realbad, leaning over to light his pipe with one of the tall candles.

"It worked all right, but something terrible happened," explained Ojo, with a little shiver at memory of that awful afternoon. "You see, when the crooked magician shook the powder over Scraps, the Patch-

work Girl, she came to life so suddenly that Unc Nunkie and Margolotte jumped up together and knocked a bottle of the Liquid of Petrification from a shelf over their heads. The liquid spilled all over them and they were immediately turned to marble."

"You don't say!" grunted Slayrum, as if he did not believe a word of the story. Ojo nodded and proceeded hurriedly with his recital.

"Well, after that the crooked magician looked in his book of magic and found that the only way to restore Unc Nunkie and Margolotte was to brew a mixture of five objects: a six-leaved clover, the left wing of a yellow butterfly, a gill of water from a dark well, three hairs from a Woozy's tail, and a drop of oil from a live man's body."

"Sounds difficult," puffed Realbad, while Snuffer regarded Ojo with round-eyed interest and attention. Even the robbers stopped talking and joking among themselves to listen.

"It was," answered Ojo soberly. "But the Patchwork Girl and the wizard's Glass Cat went with me and in case we should not succeed the wizard began making a new batch of the Powder of Life. But as that would take him five years of constantly stirring four kettles with his hands and feet, he hoped very

much that we would find the necessary articles. The Woozy we found almost at once, and as we could not pull the three hairs out of his tail he agreed to come with us. When we reached the Emerald City, I found a six-leaved clover outside the walls and picked it without asking permission. For this I was arrested and put into jail, but when Ozma learned why I wanted the six-leaved clover she immediately forgave me and also asked Dorothy and the Scarecrow to go with me to help find the other articles. We found them, too," asserted Ojo proudly, "all but the yellow butterfly's wing. The Tin Woodman who rules the yellow Winkie country would not let us kill a yellow butterfly so we had to return to the Emerald City without it. But Glinda, the Good Sorceress of the South, and the Wizard of Oz had already found another way to break the spell and when we arrived at the palace we found that Ozma had brought Unc Nunkie, Margolotte and the Crooked Magician to the capital."

"And in the wink of a cat's eye and whisker-they were restored to their proper shapes," finished Tiny helpfully.

"Yes," said Ojo pensively. "And since then, the Glass Cat and Scraps have lived with Ozma in the palace and Unc Nunkie and I have lived in a green

cottage with blue shutters just outside the city walls.

And we go to all the royal parties and celebrations, too," finished Ojo a bit complacently.

"But that does not explain the five thousand bags of sapphires," rumbled a robber from the foot of the table. "It's as much of a mystery as ever. When did these gypsies get hold of you?"

"Last night," answered Ojo, hanging his head as he remembered how all this trouble could have been avoided had he only minded Unc Nunkie. "Why not let me go?" he asked, turning suddenly to Realbad. "Take me back to the Emerald City and I am sure Ozma will reward you all."

"No! No! No!" shouted the bandits, springing angrily to their feet. "We took you in a fair fight and will be paid for our trouble."

"It wouldn't do for an outlaw to go to the Emerald City," explained Realbad patiently. "I'd probably be thrown into jail, and it wouldn't be good business to let you go either."

"And is banditry good business?" growled Snufferbux disgustedly. "It's a bad business, a mighty bad business, and well you know it."

"Well, it's the only business I have at present, so you'll just have to make the best of it." Smiling

through his pipe smoke, Realbad rose and stretched his arms high above his head. It seemed to Ojo that he looked both sorry and worried, but as he made no move to stop the robbers when they rushed toward the enormous Oz map on the wall, he concluded that he must have been mistaken.

"Here it is, Moojer Mountain!" yelled Slayrum.

"Right here in the southern part of the Munchkin country, sticking up like the wart on Tiny's nose."

"Never mind the wart on my nose," muttered Tiny sullenly, as the bandits swarmed noisily around the map. "Who's to go to Moojer Mountain and fetch those jewels?"

"Let's toss for it," drawled Realbad, indifferently drawing the dagger from his boot top. "Let's throw our daggers at the map and the man whose weapon sticks nearest to this mountain shall take Ojo and claim the reward."

"But, remember, it's to be divided!" Tiny reminded him jealously.

"Certainly," agreed Realbad. "Don't we always divide everything? Stand back, all of you, and Tiny shall have first try."

"Oh, Snuffer!" wailed Ojo, crowding close to the brown bear. "They really mean to go on with it."

All the bandits were keen shots and most of the

daggers landed on Moojer Mountain. But one perched victoriously on the very tip.

"Realbad's," muttered Tiny, plucking it out with a little grimace. "Might know he'd best us."

"Three cheers for Realbad!" called Smackeback, who always seemed to be good-natured and jolly.

"Realbad shall take Ojo to Moojer Mountain and turn him into jewels!"

CHAPTER 4

The Silver Bird

FORGOTTEN, now, was the merriment and good fellowship of the past few hours in Realbad's cave. All that Ojo now felt was repugnance and terror at the robber band's greed.

"Anyway, I'm glad Tiny did not win the right to take me to Moojer Mountain," he confided in a gloomy whisper to Snuffer.

"Take you!" growled the bear in a savage undertone. "Why wait? What do you say we make a run for it, Ojo? I can knock over a dozen of these rascals with one arm, and they're so busy with that map that we might make it."

"But I promised," objected the boy, drawing back sorrowfully.

"Promised!" wheezed the bear in exasperation "what have promises to do with a pack of ruffians like this?"

"Sh-hh, here comes Realbad," warned Ojo, as Snuffer rolled off the bench and reared angrily up on his hind legs.

"Hah, isn't this the fellow who could wrestle?" inquired the bandit teasingly, as Snuffer stood stubborn and scowling in his path. "Come on, let's have a try. Wrestling a bear with bare hands. What ho!"

Squaring off, the outlaw grinned at Snuffer and with a snarl of fury the bear rushed in, flinging both arms around the bandit. But Realbad slipped through his claws like quicksilver, and though they rolled, tumbled and squirmed all over the floor, Snuffer failed to get a firm hold on the wily, wiry, steel-muscled outlaw. Forming a circle around the two, the bandits yelled with interest and enthusiasm and even Ojo could not help a squeal of excitement as Realbad, catching Snuffer a bit off balance, bowled him over like a ten pin.

"Fine work!" Seizing the paw of the prostrate bear, the bandit shook it warmly. "We'll try again soon. I won this time, but one more biff and you

would have had me down. Now, how about some root beer to celebrate?"

With a dazed and puzzled expression in his little button eyes, Snuffer sat up. Yet strangely enough he felt no resentment. Realbad had fought bravely and well and had downed him in a fair test. No use trying again till he had back his wind, and for the present all thought of escape would have to be abandoned. Gulping down the huge mug of beer, Snufferbux sat thoughtfully blinking at the floor while the robbers vociferously clapped first him and then Realbad on the shoulders.

They had tarried so long at the table listening to Snuffer and Ojo's stories that the afternoon was already far advanced. To Ojo's intense relief it was decided that Realbad would not start for Moojer Mountain till daybreak, and after another bite to eat the bandits stretched themselves out on the floor to rest. Each man had his own bearskin rug, and surrounded by their bristling weapons the robbers lay down in orderly rows like soldiers in a barracks.

Ojo and Snuffer shared a rug by the fire, and the bear sorrowfully felt and measured the hide of his huge and fallen kinsman.

"Well, I've been floored, but I'm still in my skin,"

he wheezed mournfully, "and if I do not think of something quickly we'll both be done for!" Ojo said nothing but he quite agreed with Snuffer. Lying quietly beside him he wondered whether the robbers would ever go to sleep. When they did, he intended to take the bear's advice and make a break for freedom. Realbad was the first to close his eyes, and while Ojo was waiting for the other bandits to doze off he must have fallen asleep himself, for when he wakened the cave was dark. Only a few embers glowed in the fireplace, but as the boy raised himself cautiously on his elbow a confused murmuring struck his ears. It was Tiny and Slayrum. The two robbers were whispering together in the darkness.

"I don't like it, I tell you," hissed Tiny. "Can't you see how soft Realbad is with the boy? Pull my nose, comrade, if he doesn't mean to let him off and come back with some fish and bait story and no jewels. Besides, how is one man to carry all that treasure? We never thought of that, did we, mate? I tell you the thing to do is for us to steal this Ojo now and slip away while Realbad is still sleeping. If he wakes we'll tie him up and toss him over the cliff."

"But, would that be right?" Slayrum spoke in a hoarse wheeze. "Realbad's the chief, ye know."

"What's the matter with your being chief?" pro-

posed Tiny slyly, and in the little silence that followed, Ojo knew the bandit was thinking it over. Glancing at the calm face of Realbad, he felt suddenly very sorry for him. What rogues these robbers were, and what would happen to him if they reached Moojer Mountain and found no reward? Fling him over a cliff in all likelihood.

Rigid with suspense and anxiety, Ojo lay tensely beside Snuffer. If he roused Realbad and the bear, the robbers would overpower them all. And bandit though Realbad was, Ojo did not relish the notion of seeing him flung down a rocky gorge. Merciful Munchkin~! Here they came, treading carefully over their sleeping comrades. Turning over quickly Ojo rolled on a small sharp object. It was the silver whistle he had picked up in the forest when he was with the gypsies. It had probably fallen out of his pocket while he slept. Scarcely knowing why he did so, but only knowing he must do something, Ojo, as Slayrum's great hand reached out to snatch him, seized the whistle and blew it with all his strength. The piercing blast echoed and re-echoed through the rocky cavern. Tiny and Slayrum were so startled that they stopped in their tracks, while the other robbers popped up from their rugs like jumping

jacks, Realbad grasping his sword in both hands.

Then, before Ojo could warn him of his danger, before Tiny or Slayrum could seize the little Munchkin or impart their wicked plans to the other bandits, there was a blinding flash and flutter over the open part of the cave. A dazzling silver radiance flooded it from one end to the other, and as Ojo and the robbers shivered with astonishment, a great silver bird, seventy times as large as the largest eagle, swooped down into the bandits' lair. Each of its feathers was flashing silver and its eyes and beak were sparkling jewels that sent little sparks of radiance darting about the cave.

"who calls Opodock?" whistled the silver bird in a low melodious voice. who needs or desires his help?"

"Oh, I did, I do!" panted Ojo, recovering from his amazement before anyone else could speak. "Please send these bandits away quick!" Snatching Realbad's hand and Snuffer's paw he drew them back toward the fireplace, and it was well that he did, for the next moment, Opodock, spreading his great wings, dropped down before them. Raising his wings, Opodock fluttered them once, then again. A wind-no, a hurricane-arose, and like pebbles and sticks caught in a tidal wave the robbers were caught up

and swept out of the cavern. Only Realbad, Snuffer, Ojo and the Silver Bird remained. As Realbad, jerking away from the little Munchkin, prepared to dart after the outlaws, Opodock spoke again.

"Anything else, my masters?" But this time his voice was so soft and gentle that only one person heard it. Ojo was running wildly after Realbad, but Snufferbux, leaning close to the great Silver Bird, spoke six breathless words. Once more Opodock raised his silver wings. Another hurricane swept through the rocky enclosure and on the wings of that magic wind, Ojo, Snuffer and Realbad went sailing out of the cave, over the tree tops, up, up and up until they seemed but queerly shaped clouds whirling across the sky.

CHAPTER 5

A Safe Place

IT seemed to Ojo that they had flown or rather blown along for hours. It was not an unpleasant sensation at all, and when they presently dropped down as softly as feathers upon a glassy, flat-topped

mountain, his only feeling was one of thankfulness and relief. At last he was out of the clutches of the outlaws. Of course, Realbad was still along, but Ojo, for one reason and another, could not believe that Realbad was really as bad as he pretended to be. Looking doubtfully around at the robber chief, who had fallen beside him, he was relieved to see that he was smiling.

"Humph!" chuckled Realbad, straightening his leather jacket and feeling about for his sword. "You look like the canary who swallowed the pussy cat, Ojo."

"You mean the cat that swallowed the canary, don't you?" mumbled Snufferbux, rolling over and sitting up with a grunt.

"No, I mean the canary who swallowed the cat," repeated Realbad, sticking the sword through his belt. "Just now Ojo is the canary and I am the cat, and the canary has the upper hand, or I might say, er, wing."

"Speaking of wings, how did you like flying?" inquired Snufferbux calmly. He was so happy to be rid of the gypsies and free of the bandits that he could have conversed cheerfully about anything.

"Not bad, though a bit sudden," confessed the robber chief thoughtfully. "But who turned on this

wind, where are my men, how did we get here and why?"

"It was the silver whistle," explained Ojo, jumping up and looking earnestly into Realbad's face. "while you were asleep I heard Slayrum and Tiny planning to steal me because they thought you intended to let me go. If you awakened or objected they were going to throw you over the cliff and keep all the treasure for themselves. When they started toward me, I rolled over and this whistle I had picked up in the forest slipped out of my pocket. Thinking it might scare Tiny and Slayrum, I blew it as hard as I could. And it must have been a magic whistle, Realbad, for before I knew what was happening, down swooped that enormous bird and when I asked him to help me he flapped his wings and blew all of your men out of the cavern."

"Hm~mm! So those rascals meant to do away with me," mused Realbad slowly. "Well, Ojo, you certainly blew that whistle in the nick of time. But how did we come here? Did you ask the bird to blow us to this deserted mountain top?"

"I guess that was my doing," observed Snufferbux complacently. "when the big fellow asked if we had any more orders, neither of you heard, so I

asked it to take us quickly to some safe place."

"Safe place!" roared Realbad, leaping into the air as if he had been shot. "whatever made you do that? What good is a safe place to a bandit, I should like to know."

"Well, if you'd traveled around with gypsies as long as I have, you'd long for a safe place too, especially when you've a fine boy like Ojo to consider," sniffed the bear, wagging his head stubbornly.

"Boy, have you still got that whistle? Blow it! Blow it quick and get us away from here," panted Realbad, hurrying over to Ojo. But though Ojo searched in all of his pockets he could not find the magic whistle to summon Opodock. He had left it somewhere in the cave.

"Well, I must say this is nice!" fumed the bandit, striding fiercely up and down. "What good is a deserted mountain top to me?"

"Oh, stop fussing," advised Snuffer. "You ought to be thankful you are not lying at the bottom of some ravine instead of being high and safe up on this mountain top. You're still a highwayman. Well, isn't this high enough for you?"

"That's just the point," argued Realbad in exasperation. "How can I be a highwayman up here when there is no one to waylay or rob?"

"Well, you could reform, couldn't you?" suggested the bear, settling back comfortably against a crystal boulder. "You've lost your band, so why be a bandit? I can dance, you can sing (if I remember rightly) and Ojo, here, can pass the hat."

"What hat?" asked Ojo practically, and that made even Realbad laugh, for so swiftly had they blown to Snuffer's safe place that Ojo's hat had been left far behind them and Realbad's only weapon was the sword he had seized when he was first awakened.

"Never fear, we'll get along somehow," predicted Snufferbux cheerfully. "We'll travel all over Oz till we find the Emerald City and return Ojo to his Unc Nunkie."

"Emerald City!" sniffed the bandit, sitting down hard beside the bear. "We're not going to the Emerald City, we're going to Moojer Mountain."

"I declare, you're the stubbornest dumb creature I've ever met!" growled Snuffer, doubling up his paws. "If I'd had a grain of sense I'd never have wished you here. What good is a safe place with a fellow like you? The idea of talking like that after Ojo practically saved your life."

"That's so," admitted Realbad, looking thoughtfully over at the little Munchkin. "Well, look here,

I'll tell you what I'll do. Since Ojo saved my life I will release him from his promise and he may try to escape any time he wishes. If he doesn't escape we'll go to Moojer Mountain. Is that a bargain?"

"Oh, what is the use of bargaining," answered Ojo in a depressed voice. "We'll probably never get off this mountain, let alone reach any other one."

And it really did seem that Ojo was right. As far as they could see stretched a dazzling expanse of flat crystal rock. The sun, just rising over the mountain top, sent rosy streaks of light in every direction and already the glitter and flash of the crystal was making Ojo's eyes water. Even Snuffer was beginning to feel that his safe place was not so desirable after all. Sniffing the frosty air hungrily, the brown bear wondered what they were to do about breakfast.

"Let's look around," suggested Realbad, jumping up impatiently. "Come along, treasure, maybe we can find a path or some other way down." Ojo did not like Realbad to call him treasure, but nevertheless, he hurried after the long-legged bandit and with Snuffer lumbering and muttering behind them, they made a careful survey of the mountain top. But upon that whole flat, glittering summit there was not a single flower, plant or tree and when they reached the edge Ojo drew back with a quick shud-

der. The sides of the mountain did not slant gradually downward. There was instead a sheer perpendicular drop of two thousand feet to the bottom.

Any attempt to descend would mean destruction.

"Watch out there!" panted Realbad, as Snuffer, in his eagerness to discover some path or way down, leaned far out over the treacherous edge. "Do you want to pitch over the edge and break yourself to chips and splinters?"

"Well, what if I do?" snapped the bear in a sulky voice. "why should a real bad fellow like you care what becomes of me?"

"Oh, let's not quarrel," begged Ojo, smiling a little to himself at Realbad's fierce expression as he dragged Snufferbux away from the mountain edge.

"Let's all be friends."

"I don't see why you should be friends with a villain who intends to trade you for five thousand bags of jewels," grumbled Snuffer, jerking away from the bandit.

"But he hasn't done it yet," answered Ojo quietly.

"Let's go sit down and try to think up something."

"Can you think up a breakfast?" demanded the bear sarcastically. "If you can, just think me up some waffles and maple syrup and a big bowl of

berries."

"How about some safe tea?" roared Realbad.

"What do you think of your safe place now, old Snufficus? We shall probably perish of safety before we are done. Pah! Safety! Give me danger every time, danger, excitement and the chance of a good battle."

"Is that why you are a bandit?" asked Ojo, throwing himself down on his stomach and shading his eyes from the burning glare of the sun on the crystal rocks.

"Partly," answered Realbad, flinging himself down beside Ojo and grinning over at Snuffer, who was sitting glumly on the other side of the boy.

"But were you always one?" continued Ojo, who, like most boys, had an insatiable curiosity concerning such matters. "You don't seem like the rest of the robbers at all!"

"I don't?" exclaimed Realbad, raising up on his elbows and staring through half closed eyes at the boy. "Oh, nonsense! I'm more like the bandits than the bandits themselves. I've sworn to be a bandit. I'll be a bandit if it kills me. Do you hear?"

"Not being deaf," sniffed the bear, rocking himself sourly backward and forward, "we do!"

"But why did you swear to be a bandit when

there are so many other things to be? Besides, it's against the law," persisted Ojo.

"Law!" scoffed Realbad, thumping the rocks angrily with his fist. "What good are the laws of Oz? All my possessions and treasures were stolen from me by gentlemanly and noble rascals, so I have become an ignoble and ungentlemanly rascal and shall continue to be one till I have taken from others as much as others have taken from me."

"And how much was that?" inquired Ojo, genuinely thrilled and interested.

"Oh, let's talk about something else," muttered Realbad, running his hands through his curly black hair. "Where do you suppose those merry rogues of mine are now? I hope they're as safe and uncomfortable as we are."

"Well, I'm wondering about the gypsies," mused Ojo, seeing that Realbad would tell him no more of his own history. "They must be dreadfully hungry by this time."

"Hungry? why should they be hungry?" demanded Realbad tartly. "I bound Zithero so loosely that he probably got free in an hour and untied all the rest of his good-for-nothing, thieving scalawags."

"The pot should not call the kettle black," mur-

mured Snufferbux, snapping his little eyes maliciously.

"Are you calling me a pot?" shouted the bandit, jumping to his feet. Angrily repeating his question he struck the crystal boulder beside Snuffer a ringing blow with his sword. As Ojo, greatly alarmed, sprang up to separate the two a simply astonishing thing happened. The rock, at the first touch of Realbad's sword, swung smoothly to the right revealing a long, slanting slide that seemed to lead into the heart of the mountain.

"A way down! A way down!" roared Snufferbux, bounding off the boulder. "what luck! what gorgeous luck!"

"Pot luck, I'd call it," chuckled Realbad, winking at the bear and restored to instant good humor.

"But where do you suppose it goes?" shivered Ojo, sticking his head fearfully into the dark opening.

"Why, it's as steep and slippery as a toboggan slide. Do you think it's safe?"

"Safe! Well, I hope to Hickory not! Come along, little splinter. I've had enough safety."

"Here, let me go first," grunted the bear, pushing Realbad aside and seating himself determinedly at the top of the slide. "Then if anything happens there'll be something soft for you fellows to land on."

"Well, now that's what I call kind!" Realbad clapped Snuffer heartily on the shoulder. "I'll hold Ojo on my lap, for he is at present my only and dearest possession. All ready! One! Two! THREE!" At three, Snuffer let himself down on the slippery slide and like a shot disappeared into the darkness. Ojo had just time to gasp, "Be careful!" when Realbad seized him in his arms and seating himself on the glassy incline went whirling, dropping, and swooping after Snufferbux.

CHAPTER 6

The Frozen City

THE slide inside the crystal mountain was steeply circular and down and round and round and down sped Snuffer, Realbad and Ojo, gathering momentum as they reached the end so that they shot out like three cannon balls into the open. Ojo, wondering why he felt so cold, soon discovered that he was sitting in a snow drift. A fortunate thing, too, for it made a soft and splendid landing place. For several moments everything continued to spin; then

gradually the scenery righted itself. In place of ten mountains, Ojo now saw only one and at the foot of the mountain, scarcely a hundred yards away, stood a gleaming, glittering City of Crystal.

"Hah! Business looks up," cried Realbad, brushing the snow from his leather jacket. Jumping briskly to his feet he held out his hands to Ojo. "Breakfast, beauty, booty and what not!"

"Now, don't begin that," growled Snuffer sourly. "Ojo and I are not bandits and have no intention of becoming bandits. If we can't make our way honestly we'll starve," stated the bear, getting grimly to his feet.

"But starving is such slow work," mused Realbad teasingly. "Why be good and glum when it's so much more fun to be bad and gay? What do you say, Ojo, are you stealing or starving?"

"Perhaps the king of this city will give us some breakfast," said Ojo tactfully and without committing himself either way.

"Breakfast?" shouted Realbad, tossing his hat derisively into the air. "You're a fine couple of highwaymen. Can you think of nothing but breakfast?"

"It's a wonder he can think at all," grumbled Snufferbux, holding his head with both paws. "I've done a heap of mountain climbing in my day. I've gone

up mountains and down mountains, but I never shot through the center of a mountain before and I don't care if I never do it again.

"Quite a descent," agreed Realbad, winking at Ojo. "Quite a descent!"

"Decent!" coughed Snuffer indignantly. "There's nothing decent about it. I never experienced such an upside downside affair in my life. I'm missing a lot of fur, I'll have you know, where I'm used to wearing it, and from the feel of this climate I'll need all the fur I can get."

"Well, anyway, we're down !" exclaimed Ojo, hurrying across the field toward the sparkling highway that ran like a broad white ribbon round the base of the mountain.

"Look out! Look out!" bellowed Snuffer, whose ears were keener than those of his companions. With one leg over the fence, Ojo stopped and at what he saw nearly froze with terror. Flashing and thrashing along the highway faster than the Chicago express, was an enormous blue dragon, clouds of frosty vapor rising from its nostrils and its purple fangs darting in and out in a truly frightening manner. So tremendously long was the creature that it took several moments for its scaly, curving body to

thunder by. And scarcely had they glimpsed the end of its tail before its ugly head reappeared around the bend in the roadway.

"Bluenblackberries !" shivered Snuffer, leaning weakly against the fence. "I don't believe I'll wait for breakfast after all!"

"why not?" inquired Realbad, recklessly drawing his sword. "Some cities have walls, some cities have dragons. I have scaled walls before this and I guess I can scale a dragon without too much trouble."

"Bu~bu~it might hurt you," stuttered Ojo, hanging on to Realbad's leather coat as the bandit prepared to vault the fence. "Wait! Stop! I've thought of another way. Look, as soon as the dragon's tail goes by, let's dash across the road before the head appears. There's just about time if we hurry. I suppose it runs round and round the city like this to keep strangers out."

"Them why bother to go in?" shuddered Snuffer, turning his back as the horrid blue monster roared by for the fourth time."

"In the first place, we're cold, in the second place, we're hungry, in the third place, we're lost. Yonder we shall find warmth, food and perchance some important treasure." Raising his sword, Realbad started forward and seeing that the boy was determined

to follow him, the bear heaved himself morosely over the fence and with pounding hearts, all three waited for the dragon's tail to go by.

"How do you know it'll stay on the road?" wheezed Snuffer uncomfortably.

"We don't, we don't, that's what makes it so exciting. Tails, we win! Heads, we lose!" whispered the bandit, seizing Ojo's hand. "Hah, tails! Ready, steady, GO ~

And go they did, racing like rabbits across the icy highway and sprawling on their noses on the opposite side just as the blue dragon again came snorting into view. It let out such a whistle and scream and cast such a baleful glare in their direction that Ojo had no memory at all of how he reached or dashed through the gates of the Crystal City. To tell the truth, he had almost flown, arriving there just three puffs and a pant ahead of Snufferbux and Realbad. Slamming the gates and shooting the bolts, Realbad swung round prepared to face the city's soldiers 'or guards. And guards there were, in tens and dozens, drawn up stiffly on each side of the road, but they looked neither to the left nor to the right and paid no attention to the travelers at all.

"Why-why, they're frozen! Everybody's frozen,

Realbad," Ojo said, looking around with a little shiver; and he was perfectly right about that. A strange, uneasy hush hung over the glittering city. Its tall buildings and houses of crystal were uncannily soundless and still. The citizens themselves in various attitudes and postures stood motionless in the streets and by-ways. An old woman, her broom still poised for sweeping, was in the doorway of a shop. A boy whistling along on his way to the shop had been frozen with his lips still puckered and one foot upraised.

"Cold cheer," muttered Realbad, blowing on his fingers. "This must have happened in a hurry, boys. There's a fellow caught in the middle of a sneeze. What a face!"

"They're funny enough looking without being frozen," grunted Snuffer, lumbering down the street after Ojo. "They're all crystal. You can see right through their heads."

"That's because they had trans-parents," laughed Realbad, striding rapidly toward the crystal palace at the end of the tree-lined avenue.

"Well, if I had nothing in my head I'd rather no one knew it," grumbled Snuffer, staring morosely at a crystal policeman.

"What's the difference? They'd know it anyway

as soon as you opened your mouth." Realbad looked back over his shoulder and laughed provokingly.

Then, dodging the crystal flower pot Snuffer snatched from a window ledge and flung after him, he dashed through the swinging doors into the palace itself.

Ojo and the bear were not far behind, for the streets of the frozen city were bitterly cold and they hoped for a little warmth inside. But the same icy silence greeted them. It was so frigid, in fact, that Snuffer forgot his anger and began to beat his breast with both arms and dance a brisk gypsy fandango down the long, blue, velvet-carpeted hallway.

All the furnishings in this stately palace were of crystal, crystal chairs, sofas, tables, crystal chandeliers and ornaments. Blue damask hangings and blue velvet carpets toned in well with these glittering appurtenances, but the three cold and hungry adventurers were by this time too frozen and uncomfortable to appreciate the castle's magnificence. With chattering teeth they ran past the frozen footmen and serving maids to the throne room.

The king and queen, splendidly clothed in blue velvet and ermine, were seated on their crystal thrones staring with glassy-eyed indifference straight ahead of them. The court musicians had congealed

in the middle of a waltz, some with fiddle bows up-
raised, others with cheeks puffed out for a good blow
at the horns. The crystal courtiers stood or sat
around in rigid groups, scowls, smiles and even
yawns frozen on their handsome faces. Their cos-
tumes Ojo thought exceedingly fine with their lacy
ruffs, slashed sleeves and long lengths of silk and
velvet. Seizing a cloak from a stiff and frozen page,
wrapped it around his own shivering body and
tiptoed over to an old sage who was gazing fixedly
into a huge crystal ball. Looking over the old fel-
low's shoulder, Ojo was astonished to see words form-
ing in the ball.

"Ojo, beware! You are in great danger!" an-
nounced the crystal ball in flashing blue letters.
Snufferbux, just behind Ojo, gave a bounce of ter-
ror.

"Of course you're in danger!" sneezed the bear
bitterly. "Traveling around with a good-for-nothing
robber. We're all in danger. It's worse than danger-
ous to be as cold as this." Snuffer wrathfully broke
the icicle that had formed on the end of his nose and
threw it angrily on the floor. "Now that you're here,
perhaps you'll tell us what you intend to do," he sput-
tered, facing Realbad with clenched paws.

"Bear to the right," directed the bandit calmly.

He too had read the message in the crystal ball, and grasping Ojo by the arm hurried him along to the castle kitchens. "There ought to be something to eat in here," puffed the bandit, pushing aside a stiff and sour-looking serving maid and leaning her up against the wall. But in the ice box they found nothing but glass fruit, and the cook in his tall cap still bending over the stove had his spoon in a mixture that turned out to be ground glass soup.

"Ooh-let-t-t's make a fire;" shivered Ojo, pointing to a box of kindling beside the shining porcelain stove. And as this seemed a sensible suggestion, Realbad proceeded to carry it out and soon had a crackling blaze going. Crowding close to the stove, they were all beginning to thaw out a bit, when Ojo, who was standing nearest to the crystal cook, screamed sharply. The cook after turning upon them a mellow and despairing glance was dissolving before their eyes.

"Oh! Oh! Get a mop! Put out the fire! Do something quick!" wailed the boy, as the stiff white suit of the luckless chef collapsed into the pool of water on the floor, all that was now left of the poor fellow.

"It's all my fault!" groaned Realbad, snatching a cloth from a nail and beginning to mop up the cook

and squeeze him into a bucket. "All my fault. I've taken whatever I needed, but I've never reduced any-one to such a pass as this before!"

"Put out the fire," coughed Snufferbux, whirling round like a dervish. "Help! The kitchen maid's beginning to go. Quick, water! water!" While Ojo was hurriedly filling a dishpan at the sink, Snuffer wildly seized the pail from Realbad and dashed it over the stove.

"Now, now you've done it!" sputtered Realbad. "That was the cook, you big donkey. Not satisfied to have melted him, you must throw him on the fire."

"Well, he's fired now all right," murmured Snuffer, backing uneasily away from the steaming stove.

"Mm-mm! What'll the king say?" breathed Ojo, holding on to the edge of the table.

"Well," answered Realbad, straightening up with an anxious frown. "Judging from present indications, he won't say anything. No use crying over spilt milk, er, cooks. Just keep cool, both of you, and wait here till I see what I can pick up."

"It seems sort of a shame to leave them all enchanted like this," said Ojo, wrapping the page's cloak a little more tightly around him.

"Well, we didn't enchant them," grumbled Snufferbux, who felt so upset about the cook that he wished

to leave as soon as possible, "and it won't do any good for us to stand around and congeal. I feel like a frozen custard already."

"Just the same, I believe Realbad could help them," insisted Ojo, looking hopefully up at the bronzed outlaw. "And then the king might give you half of the kingdom for a reward and you wouldn't have to steal anything."

"And don't forget the princess," put in Snuffer sarcastically. "You will probably have to marry that big, empty-headed, glassy-eyed daughter standing behind their Majesties and then where'll you be?"

"I am married," answered Realbad quietly.

"Then where is your wife?" demanded Ojo. He just could not understand this big robber chief at all. Instead of answering, Realbad stared somberly at the floor, apparently lost in unhappy memories. Then, pulling himself together with a great effort, he grasped his sword.

"Come, now," he exclaimed, smiling thoughtfully at Ojo. "Since you think I am such a stout fellow, I'll have a try at this enchantment breaking and I have a notion that crystal ball will help." So, forgetting their cold and discomfort, they hurried back to the throne room and stared intently into the clear

glass ball.

"How shall I release Crystal City from this icy spell?" inquired Realbad in a commanding voice.

"Kill the blue dragon," flashed the crystal immediately.

"That's what I should have done in the first place," exclaimed the bandit, slapping his knee. "Wait here, you two, and leave the rest to me."

"Good-bye, then," choked Snuffer, thrusting out his huge brown paw. "I know you're a robber and an outlaw, but I'll never forget that dinner you gave me."

"Why, Snuffer, you talk as if he were never coming back," cried Ojo in alarm.

"Well, you saw the dragon!" Snuffer shrugged his shoulders and shuffling over to the window looked mournfully over the frozen city. But Realbad, with a reassuring grin at Ojo, rushed out of the throne room.

"Let's go help him," said Ojo, staring after the bandit, but Snuffer was too quick for him and seizing the boy held him tightly.

"Wait!" he panted coaxingly. "Do you want to be a dragon's breakfast and lunch? Wait! Keep still, do you hear me?" Under the circumstances there was nothing else for Ojo to do, as it was per-

fectly impossible to escape from the bear's grasp.

Fuming, kicking and scolding, Ojo passed ten of the most uncomfortable moments of his life. As he loudly and indignantly and for the twentieth time shouted for Snufferbux to let him go, he became suddenly aware of music. Then,

"Silence~" called a harsh voice. "Silence!" Squirming round in the bear's arms, Ojo saw the crystal king pointing an angry finger in his direction. "Be quiet!" commanded the king, shaking his scepter threateningly.

The whole court had come to life. The musicians were finishing their waltz, the courtiers their smiles, yawns, or bits of bored conversation.

"Oh, be quiet yourself," rumbled Snufferbux, losing his temper. "If it hadn't been for us you'd be quiet enough. If it hadn't been for Realbad, you'd still be frozen stiff and proper."

"Realbad?" queried the crystal queen, leaning forward languidly as the musicians finished up their piece with a stately flourish. "Who is he?"

"A bandit," Snuffer told her with strange satisfaction. "A bandit, an outlaw and a robber chief."

"A bandit! Oh, help!" quavered the queen, waving her arms gracefully from side to side and trying to

catch a glimpse of herself in the long mirror opposite
as she did so. "Oh, help!"

"He has helped you already!" said Snuffer, stamping his foot impatiently. "He has killed the blue dragon and broken the enchantment."

"What enchantment?" sniffed the king, fitting a monocle in his eye and staring haughtily down at Ojo.

"Great Gillikens, didn't you know you were enchanted?" gasped Ojo in huge disgust.

"The boy speaks truth," announced the old wise man, who had been staring all this while into the crystal ball. "It says here that we have been frozen for fifty years."

"Fifty years!" grunted the king fretfully. "Impossible!" During the confusion following this statement, Realbad tiptoed quietly and unconcernedly back into the room and took his place between Snuffer and Ojo.

"Well, how are the chances for a reward?" he whispered merrily, looking around with twinkling blue eyes. "I see they are all unfrizzed."

Before Ojo could answer the glassy eye of the king for the first time caught a glimpse of the bandit.

"Seize that robber! Lock up that outlaw! Call out the guard!" thundered his Majesty in a cracked and

furious voice.

CHAPTER 7

Realbad's Reward

"Well, that's gratitude for you," murmured Realbad, raising Qne eyebrow, as the pages ran off to fetch the crystal guardsmen. "Let's not wait for the reward, boys. I don't believe we're going to like it."

"But how did you kill the dragon?" breathed Ojo, for even their present danger could not quench his curiosity.

"Shh-h!" murmured Snufferbux. "The king seems to be changing his mind. The ugly princess has taken a fancy to you, Realbad!" Sure enough, the king's tall and angular daughter was talking earnestly to her royal parent, and after a few gloomy nods the king stepped down from his throne and raising his hand for silence began to speak:

"These odd-looking travelers have undoubtedly broken the spell cast upon us by the Snow Dwarfs," declared his Majesty solemnly. "Walking at the foot of Snow Mountain, which you all know is on the

other side of Crystal Mountain, our royal daughter, Crystobel, was accosted by the dwarf king. He insisted that she marry him at once and spend the rest of her days in his underground ice palace. When the princess coldly refused his offer the Snow Dwarf flew into a terrible passion and, promising to be revenged upon the princess, disappeared between the roots of an oak tree. Hurrying home, Crystobel rushed into the throne room to explain the whole affair to us, but as the court musicians were playing my favorite waltz our thoughtful daughter decided to wait till the piece was finished."

"Well, the dwarf king did not wait," put in Realbad, swinging his broad sword carelessly. "He sent his pet dragon to freeze up your town. This monster breathes frost instead of flames and has been circling Crystal City for fifty years, keeping you all at freezing point and preventing anyone from getting in."

"Then how did you manage to get in?" inquired the king in an annoyed voice.

"Oh, a bandit always manages," drawled Realbad, with a provoking wink. "And now, since I have destroyed this monster and restored your fair city, I beg that your Majesty will give us some breakfast, a fitting reward, and allow us to continue our journey."

"A bandit is an outlaw and therefore not entitled to a reward," whispered the old wise man craftily.

"Why should King Christopher and Queen Christine reward you for breaking the enchantment? You did it of your own free will."

"Yes, why should I reward you?" sniffed the king, motioning sternly for the guards to approach.

"Because I ask you to," stated the ugly princess, rolling her glittering eyes greedily at Realbad. "This fellow pleases me and I shall marry him forthwith. The boy shall be my page. And what can you do?" inquired the princess, looking speculatively at Snufferbux.

"Why, he can dance," explained Realbad obligingly, and before Snufferbux had time to growl for himself.

"How splendid!" murmured the queen, leaning forward eagerly. you know, my dear, no one has ever been able to keep step with you. No one ever asks you to dance at court balls and this bear would save us all so much embarrassment."

"Mother!" Flashing her stony eyes and stamping her tremendous glass slipper, the princess succeeded in silencing the queen and turned again to her royal father. "Well?" she demanded haughtily.

"Well!" repeated the king, looking terribly put out. "Since you wish it, I suppose I must consent, but I can't say I'll relish a robber for a son-in-law, and a bear at court will be dreadfully awkward-dreadfully awkward!" Tapping his foot irritably on the floor, King Chris stuck out his under lip and looked crossly at his three rescuers. "Of course, they will have to be crystallized," he finished unhappily.

"Crystallized!" whistled Realbad, who had been listening to the conversation with an amused grin. "Oh, that wouldn't suit us at all!"

"Let's shove along," wheezed Snufferbux. The bear had been looking anxiously at the enormous feet of the ugly princess and had no desire or intention of dancing with her. "Too bad we bothered with them at all, cold-hearted, empty-headed lumps." But before Snuffer and Realbad, with Ojo between them, could push past their Majesties, they were rudely seized by the royal guards.

"Crystallize the boy first," directed the king in a bored voice. While Realbad and Snuffer struggled with the guards, Ojo was jerked forward. Now the old sage, taking a small instrument that looked like a blow-gun from his sleeve, sprayed the boy with a sparkling shower of crystal flakes. In the horrid moment that followed, Ojo imagined he could feel

himself turning to crystal and wondered how he would ever find his way back to Unc Nunkie with a glass head and a hollow body.

"Anyway, I won't be hungry any more," shivered the boy, rubbing first one arm and then the other. He heard two of the crystal guards' heads crack together as Realbad strove to free himself and the roars of Snuffer almost drowned out the mumbling of the wise man.

"It cannot be done, Your Majesty," shrilled the sage, after sending another shower of crystal sparks over Ojo. "Some power is working against me."

"Then throw them out," directed the king heartlessly. "This racket is 'noiseating'!"

"Not the bandit," cried the princess. "Crystal or not, I shall marry him." Now Realbad had by this time more or less cracked up and broken ten of his crystal captors, and, as the ugly princess drew nearer, with a supreme effort he hurled off the other ten. Brushing Crystobel aside, he seized Ojo and darted through a swinging door at the back of the throne. Snufferbux, thus encouraged, made quick work of the remaining guards and with flailing arms beat his way through the startled servants and courtiers.

"Where to?" panted the bear, pounding heavily

after the bandit and Ojo.

"Out!" cried Realbad, raising his sword. "Out and on!" Down one passage and another they hurried, bursting at last through a great green door that led straight into the clear and heartening sunshine.

They had come out on the other side of Crystal City near the edge of a rippling blue stream.

"I don't remember any body of water around here," puffed the bear, shading his eyes with one paw.

"There was another kind of body, though," Realbad reminded him, with a little laugh. "A blue dragon's body. There is your dragon, Ojo. I carried wood from the kitchen, built a fire in the road and he melted away like a snowflake."

"You must have worked pretty fast," marvelled Ojo, recalling the mad dash they had made across the road between the dragon's tail and head.

"Oh, I helped my fire along with gun oil and some cartridges I had in my pocket," admitted Realbad modestly, "and now, boys, I expect we'll have to swim the dragon. Hello, here come the king's footmen and what's left of the guards. Unless Snuffer wants to stay and dance with the princess, we'd better swim quick!"

"Wumph!" snorted Snuffer, and waddling rapidly

down the bank he plunged head first into the icy stream.

"Still got that ring I gave you?" asked Realbad, slipping off his boots and tying them around his neck. Glancing down at the golden circlet on his middle finger, Ojo nodded, one eye on Realbad and one eye on the crystal footmen running toward them.

"Then come on," cried Realbad, and swinging Ojo to his back he stepped into the dragon-I mean the river-and swam easily across.

"We're still in the Munchkin country," said Ojo, as the robber chief set him down and gave himself a great shake. "See, there is a small blue house and the grass and fences are blue, too."

"So's the sky," smiled Realbad, sitting down to draw on his boots. "What are you eating, Snuffer? Would we like it?"

"Ants," grunted the bear, who had turned up a blue rock and was licking it first on one side and then on the other. "Delicious little ants."

"Let's try the house," said Ojo, who was sure he would not care for Snuffer's breakfast. "It is so little it must belong to some one poor and poor people are always kinder than kings."

"So you've found that out, have you?" Realbad smiled down at the boy, and taking his hand started toward the cottage. The house was neat and tidy, evidently the property of some simple Munchkin shepherd, for they could see his flocks grazing in the distance. The shepherd himself was not at home, but there was milk, butter and fresh eggs in the kitchen, so Ojo and Realbad borrowed a hearty breakfast. Snuffer, tiring of ants, soon joined them and after several loaves of the shepherd's fresh bread announced himself ready for anything. Leaving a short hunting knife to pay for the breakfast, Realbad stood uncertainly in the doorway. Across the dragon river they could see the twinkling spires of Crystal City, which none of them ever cared to visit again. To the east rose a long line of blue and misty hills. A forest edged the rolling pasture on the west and back of the house there seemed to be nothing but meadows and farmlands.

"Which way shall we go?" pondered Realbad, thoughtfully rubbing his lean cheek. "Those hills may lead to Moojer Mountain, but I am always happier in a forest."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Snuffer sharply. "What ails you, anyway? Just as I begin to like you real well, you start this Moojering again."

You are not going to take Ojo one step toward Moojer Mountain and I'm here to tell you so."

"Let's try the forest," proposed Ojo, who hated these continued arguments. "Maybe the Emerald City is right on the other side of it. We can't be so very far away."

"All right," yawned Realbad, who was somewhat wearied by the excitement in Crystal City. "If we come to the Emerald City first, you win. If we come to Moojer Mountain first, I win. How's that?"

"Preposterous !" sputtered Snufferbux, flouncing on ahead "Come on!" Peace being restored for a little while, they proceeded amiably enough toward the shadowy forest.

"How will the Crystal King manage without his guards?" asked Ojo, switching at the long meadow grass with a long sapling.

"Oh, we didn't break them all," laughed Realbad, winking at Snuffer. "Just splintered a few heads and fingers. A little glue and they'll be as lively as ever."

"They're all cracked anyway," grumbled the bear, who could not get over the shabby treatment of King Christopher. "I'm glad I melted his cook. Serves him jolly well right."

"But it's funny they couldn't crystallize me," continued Ojo, trudging along contentedly between his two companions. "I thought for a moment I was done for!"

"You're a brave little splinter." Realbad looked approvingly down at the boy. "You'll go far, my lad!"

"No doubt, thanks to you," put in Snuffer sarcastically. "A fine example you are to a growing boy, with your lawless advice and thugduggery."

"Whatever that is," yawned Realbad, patting Snuffer kindly on the shoulder.

"Yes, and suppose you had a son of your own," persisted the bear. "How would you like him to be tracking through the woods with a bandit who'd trade him in a minute for a vile heap of treasure?"

"Stop! Stop!" begged the bandit, with mendous yawn. "Lectures make me so drowsy. I'll simply have to have forty winks."

"Well, taking forty winks will harm no one," went on Snuffer, in a milder voice. "I wouldn't mind stopping a bit myself. My knee's creaking like a rusty hinge." As they had by this time reached the forest itself, they stopped under an immense chestnut tree to rest. Ojo was much too excited by all that had happened and all that might yet happen to

think of sleeping, but Realbad, exhausted by his battle with the guards, was asleep almost as soon as he touched the ground and did not even hear Ojo and Snuffer's subdued conversation.

"It seems to me," said Snuffer, rubbing his knee briskly with both paws, "it seems to me," he repeated, squinting thoughtfully over at Ojo, "that you should be a lot more worried about this Moojer Mountain affair than you are. Now why aren't you?"

"Well," admitted Ojo, rolling over on his stomach, "I think Ozma and Unc Nunkie will find me soon and then everything will be all right."

"But how will they find you?" demanded Snuffer. "The magic picture will help them," answered the boy promptly. "As soon as Unc Nunkie discovered I was gone he probably hurried right over to the palace and asked Ozma to look in the magic picture."

"Will it really show them where you are?" asked Snuffer incredulously.

"Of course!" Ojo spoke a bit condescendingly, for living in the most famous fairy city in Oz he was quite used to magic appliances.

"Then you mean someone is coming to help you right now?" said Snuffer in a relieved voice. Ojo nodded.

"But I hope they won't find me too soon," he added dreamily. "We're having such a fine time together."

"Fine time! My fur and feathers!" wheezed the bear in disgust. "Just suppose Realbad really finds Moojer Mountain before Unc Nunkie finds you. A nice thing that will be. I tell you, Ojo, it's madness to take the chance. Come! Now, while he's asleep, let us steal off and get as far away as possible before he wakens."

"I don't believe he means to claim the reward," insisted Ojo stubbornly. "Besides it was my fault he lost all his men. Why, he hasn't anyone now except you and me."

"And he won't have us long," decided Snuffer, rolling to his feet with agility and determination. "If you want to see your old friends again and reach the Emerald City, now's the time to break away."

"But I hate to leave him here all by himself," sighed Ojo, as Snuffer began to pull him along.

"Just think of it as a game," pleaded the bear earnestly. "It's our move now. If we don't take it you may never see Unc Nunkie again."

In his heart Ojo could not help feeling that Snuffer was right, so slowly and reluctantly he tiptoed after the bear, looking back every few minutes at the long, handsome figure resting so quietly and un-

suspectingly under the chestnut tree. How he would miss this frank and fearless comrade. It seemed almost as if he were betraying him.

CHAPTER 8

Meanwhile in the Emerald City

NOW Ojo had been right in thinking Une Nunkie would immediately report his absence to Ozma. After searching all through the little blue cottage and after tramping frantically all over the deserted gypsy encampment, the old Munchkin nobleman ran all the way back to the palace. Ozma and her councillors were at dinner, so Unc was ushered right into the Grand Dining Hall.

"Gone!" gulped the old gentleman breathlessly, and twisting his blue hat miserably in his hands.

"You mean the gypsies?" asked Ozma, quietly setting down her emerald goblet, for Unc Nunkie had duly reported the presence of the mischievous band outside the city walls.

"Ojo!" explained Unc Nunkie, sinking into the green chair a footman hastily brought for him.

"Stolen!"

"Oh! Oh! Ojo's stolen by gypsies!" wailed Scraps, clasping her cotton fingers anxiously. As Ojo had been present at her coming-to-life party and had brought her with him to the Emerald City, the Patchwork Girl was fonder of the boy than of anyone else in the capital.

"Get down your guns, roll up your sleeves!
And stop these villains, rogues and thieves!"

yelled Scraps, bounding to her feet and wildly waving her arms.

"There, there, my good girl, you'll burst a seam," cautioned the Scarecrow, who was sitting beside her.

"Calm yourself, I beg, and stand on your own feet if you don't mind!"

"Quiet, please!" Ozina smiled kindly but reprov-
ingly at the cotton-stuffed maiden. "Sit down, Scraps,
and we'll all try to think of the best thing to do."

"Perhaps Ojo just followed the gypsies," suggest-
ed Dorothy, a little Kansas girl who now lives in the
Emerald City as a Princess of Oz.

"Good," muttered Unc, shaking his head solemnly.

"Of course he's too good!" said Ozma soothingly.

"No, I do not believe Ojo would willingly run away
from Unc Nunkie. What do you think, Wizard?"

"I agree with Scraps. I believe Ojo has been stolen," answered the Wizard of Oz, from his place at the foot of the long table.

"But why would anyone steal Ojo?" demanded Trot, another little mortal from America who lives in the Emerald Palace.

"Yes, you'd think they would have come here and tried to steal some of your treasures," added Betsy Bobbin, popping a cherry into her rosy little mouth. Betsy, too, is a little American girl now making her home in the famous capital and much preferring Oz to the United States.

"Ve-ry strange!" droned Tik Tok, the Machine Man, who, not requiring any food, stood in back of Betsy's chair. "Ve-ry sing-u-lar." And with all the celebrities and courtiers chiming in with surmises and opinions it was soon impossible to make head or tail of the matter. Finally Ozma tapped for silence.

"If Ojo has been stolen, some one must be sent to find him," decided Ozma in her gentle voice. Uncle Nunkie said nothing but jumped eagerly to his feet.

"Let me go," begged Scraps, pushing back her chair. "Not being a real person, the worst that can happen to me is a tear or rip that may be easily mended."

"And I'll go, too," declared Dorothy. "For I know almost all of the cities and countries in Oz."

"If Dorothy goes, I go." Scrambling out from under the table where he had been comfortably finishing off a rare roast, the Cowardly Lion blinked nervously at the little Ruler of Oz. "What could two girls and an old man do with a band of rascally gypsies? There'll probably be battles, fighting and dangers of all kinds." The Cowardly Lion's voice shook woefully at the prospect, but his eyes were fixed steadfastly and devotedly on Dorothy and he wagged his tail vigorously to keep up his courage.

"Why, that will be splendid," agreed Ozma, who knew from long experience that however cowardly the lion felt, he could always be depended upon to act courageously.

"But with my new search light it will be unnecessary for anyone to go," protested the Wizard, leaving his place at the foot of the table and talking earnestly into the little fairy's ear.

"I know," mused Ozma, resting her elbow on the arm of her green chair. "But we'll take no chances, Wizard. To-morrow you start working on your search light; meanwhile we will look in the magic picture and see where Ojo now is; then to-morrow, Dorothy, Scraps and the Cowardly Lion can go to help him.

But the Scarecrow, Unc Nunkie and I will drive to the castle of Glinda the Good to consult the book of magic records. For surely it will tell why Ojo has been carried off in this mysterious fashion."

Now Glinda, as most of us know, rules over the Red Quadling Country of Oz and in her castle is an enormous record book in which daily entries are magically entered concerning all of the important happenings in Oz. This record book, closely guarded and frequently consulted, has more than once saved Oz from disaster and destruction.

Loud cheers greeted Ozma's announcements, and too excited to wait for dessert the whole company trooped upstairs to the little fairy's private sitting room. Pulling the cord that parted the velvet hangings before the picture, Ozma commanded it to show them the missing little Munchkin. First, a dark and dangerous looking forest appeared on the cloudy glass surface of the picture. Then, swinging and swaying from side to side, came the three gypsy wagons, and as the curtains of the last wagon blew aside they could see Ojo firmly clasped in the arms of an enormous brown bear.

Covering his face with his hands, Unc Nunkie sank groaning into a golden rocking chair, and with sol-

em and anxious faces Ojo's friends watched until the gypsy wagons faded from view. Even Ozina looked serious, and Scraps was so alarmed at the size of the bear that she was all for starting out at once. But they finally persuaded her to wait till morning so that Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion could have some rest before starting out on so perilous a mission.

Setting her alarm clock for four o'clock, with the lion dozing fitfully at the foot of her bed and Scraps slumped down gloomily in a green arm chair, Dorothy retired at once. Near the clock was a box of the Wizard's famous wishing pills. As soon as the clock struck four, Dorothy meant to look again in the magic picture, swallow a pill and wish herself and companions to the spot where Ojo happened to be at that moment. Convinced that she and her two friends could safely bring Ojo back to the Emerald City, Dorothy fell almost immediately into a sound and dreamless slumber. Unc Nunkie stayed at the palace all night, for Ozma intended to start at day-break for Glinda's castle and as all the celebrities, courtiers, servants and attendants wished to be up to see the royal rescuers off, they all retired immediately and by eight O'clock there was not a single light in that whole magical castle.

Dorothy awakened to find Scraps beside her bed.

She was clutching the alarm clock in one hand and thumping the Cowardly Lion with the other.

"Are you deaf?" demanded the Patchwork Girl impatiently. "Come on, it's time to go!" Dorothy had been sleeping so soundly that she had not heard the alarm, but snatching her clothes from a chair she scurried into her little green dressing room and in five minutes was all ready for the journey. Tip-toeing into Ozma's sitting room she snapped on the light and commanded the picture to show her Ojo again. The magic picture immediately flashed back to another view of the blue forest and there was Ojo fast asleep in the gypsy wagon. So, hastening back to her companions, Dorothy picked up the basket of magic supplies and charms given her by Ozma the night before, climbed on the Cowardly Lion's back and prepared to swallow a wishing pill.

"Now be careful how you wish," cautioned the Cowardly Lion nervously. "If you wish too fast we're sure to bump into something."

"wish your wish and wish it quick,
This wait and worry makes me sick,"

muttered Scraps, springing up behind Dorothy. "I wish we were in that grumpy forest this very minute!" With a bounce that sent the basket of charms flying out of Dorothy's hand, the Cowardly Lion shot through the open window and disappeared. If you have never been transported by a wish, you have no idea how swift and upsetting an experience it can be, and when, exactly forty-nine seconds later, Ojo's three rescuers bounced down in the Blue Forest, they were almost too stunned and breathless for speech.

"I told-you-to be careful!" choked the Cowardly Lion, shaking his mane fretfully. "I've stubbed all of my toes and got sand in my ears."

"Oh, Scraps," wailed Dorothy, tumbling disconsolately off the lion's back. "Whatever made you wish before I did? Now you've ruined everything!"

"What do you mean?" The Cowardly Lion looked at the little girl anxiously. "Aren't we where you wished us to be, Dorothy? Sa-ay, I don't see any gypsies around here. I-I don't see anything."

"That's because it's too dark," said Scraps, trying to speak jauntily.

"Well, where's the basket of charms to save Ojo and get us back to the Emerald City?" roared the lion, beginning to lash his tail angrily.

"Oh, don't you see?" explained Dorothy in a dis-

tressed voice. "Just as I swallowed the wishing pill and before I could wish us to the right place, Scraps wished us here, and we started so fast the basket flew out of my hand and now we have no magic to help us at all."

"Well, a fine meddling nuisance you've turned out to be," scolded the Cowardly Lion, looking sternly around at the Patchwork Girl. "Now what are we to do, Miss?"

"That magic picture told us that Ojo was in the Blue Forest. This forest is blue, so what's the fussing about? All we have to do is look around for him." Sliding off the lion's back, Scraps tossed her yarn hair and started off sulkily by herself.

"I guess that is all we can do," sighed Dorothy, climbing resignedly up on the Cowardly Lion. "But it seems like a pretty big forest to me, and there won't be any breakfast, either, for the magic dinner bell was in that basket, too."

"The one the Red Jinn gave Jack Pumpkinhead and Jack Pumpkinhead gave to Ozma?" asked the lion, sniffing the keen air hungrily.

"Yes," Dorothy said regretfully. "All we had to do was ring the bell and the slave of the bell would bring us breakfast, dinner or lunch on a silver tray."

Scraps, being well stuffed with cotton, did not require food, but she felt so annoyed to think she had caused all the trouble that she burst into a loud and defiant song.. It was useless to remonstrate with the reckless Patchwork Girl, and riding soberly along on the lion's back Dorothy wondered what they would do if they really did meet the gypsies. Without any magic to help them they might easily be captured and carried off themselves. Then, too, four o'clock is pretty early and dark to be abroad, and the Cowardly Lion, stepping carefully along, trembled at each crackling of a twig or movement in the underbrush. Even Scraps stopped singing after awhile, for the forest was truly immense and as it grew deeper and darker the possibility of finding Ojo and ~ the gypsies seemed less and less probable.

"This reminds me of the time we were looking for the Scarecrow and found Sir Hokus," said the lion, speaking in a low growl out of the corner of his mouth.

"We've been on lots of hunts together, haven't we?" answered Dorothy, leaning over to give the big fellow a hug. "Remember when I found you?" The lion nodded emphatically, for he and Dorothy have been chums for years--ever since the little girl blew to Oz in a cyclone. On that first exciting visit

Dorothy had discovered the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and the Cowardly Lion and they had all traveled to the Emerald City to see the Wizard of Oz, who was at that time ruler of this famous fairy land. Afterward, when Dorothy came back to live in Oz, the Cowardly Lion had been her staunchest protector and friend. Indeed, these two have had so many adventures together that their experiences alone fill several volumes of Oz history. So, to cheer the way through the gloomy forest, they began to talk of old times.

Scraps, flouncing along beside them, listened politely enough for a while. Then, as the Cowardly Lion began to recall a visit they had once made in Fix City, she indignantly flung up her arms.

"Oh, forget all that ancient history," she cried rudely. "Let's talk about the present and now and what's happening to Ojo. I suppose by now that bear has devoured him."

"Bears do not eat little boys," rumbled the Cowardly Lion, peering nervously to the left and right.

"Besides-" Scraps, knowing that the lion was going to say that if she had not interfered they would have been with Ojo by this time, rushed ahead and disappeared between two enormous umbrella trees. Al-

most instantly she was back, her suspender button
eyes twinkling with excitement

"A path! A road, come on, come on!
we'll catch those gypsies up at dawn."

"There, there! Keep your hair on," advised the
Cowardly Lion, trotting sedately after the excited
maiden.

"Maybe it is the road they took," breathed Dorothy,
as the lion stood blinking at the road that
started on the other side of the umbrella trees and
cut clearly and whitely through the blue forest.

"Mmm-m, yes," agreed the lion thoughtfully.

"What does that sign say, Scraps?"

"ROLLING ROAD," read the Patchwork Girl with
a little bounce.

"An odd enough name for a road." The Cowardly
Lion flattened his ears suspiciously.

"I think it's rather pretty," observed Dorothy.

"We had a Rolling Road back home. It means it's
a little hilly."

"Oh, if that's all it means, here goes!" Gathering
himself together for a spring, the Cowardly Lion
quickly and gracefully launched himself forward,
Scraps jumping gaily after him. And that is all they

remembered for some time, for the road, curling up like a parchment, rolled rapidly and noisily through the forest, the three startled rescuers rattling around helplessly inside.

CHAPTER 9

Dorothy in Dicksy Land

Too shaken and tossed about to know where they were heading, Dorothy, the Cowardly Lion and Scraps were carried swiftly along by the mischievous road. Finally, opening suddenly to its full length, it tilted them carelessly into a field of blue clover and went off by itself. Dorothy, feeling exactly like a little boy who has rolled down hill in a barrel, made a feeble attempt to rise. But this, she found, was perfectly impossible. She was rolled up tightly like a ball and try as she would could not straighten herself out again. She could hear Scraps and the Cowardly Lion scolding and grumbling beside her, and peering between her knees~ which were tightly pressed against her nose, she saw that her two companions were in the same uncomfortable predicament as herself.

"Just like jelly rolls," thought Dorothy, giving her knees a fretful push.

"Keep rolling! Keep rolling! It's the only thing to do," advised a cheery voice from somewhere behind them, and though Dorothy could not see the person who offered this suggestion she decided to try it anyway. So, seizing her feet in a firm grasp, she began rolling over and over like a hoop, with Scraps and the Cowardly Lion, still complaining bitterly, rolling along after her. It was very dusty and fatiguing and Dorothy was about to stop and make another desperate attempt to unroll, when the ground unaccountably dropped from under her and she fell with a tremendous splash into some very rough and chilly water. It is hard to see clearly when you are doubled up and the three had been so busy rolling that they had rolled right off the road into the Munchkin River.

"Ugh!" gurgled Dorothy angrily. Then, as she began to unroll and straighten like a paper doll does when wet, she gave a little gasp of relief and struck out sturdily for the other side. The Cowardly Lion and Scraps had come unwound, too, and the lion, after making sure Dorothy was all right, caught the Patchwork Girl in his teeth and swam swiftly across.

"Poor Scraps, she'll be soggy for hours," thought

Dorothy, as she reached the other side and scrambled up the sandy bank.

"Well, how did you enjoy your breakfast?" inquired the Cowardly Lion, dropping Scraps on the grass and giving himself a disgusted shake. "A dozen rolls and a barrel of water."

"Don't talk about rolls," begged Dorothy, running over to the Patchwork Girl. "I thought we would have to roll on forever."

"Squeeze me out, for the love of pie,
And hang me up somewhere to dry,,"

coughed Scraps. "That rolling has made me feel perfectly pretzelish and now I'm sloshing all over the place. Oh, dear, I sorter despise all water."

Wringing out the Patchwork Girl was quite an undertaking, but the Cowardly Lion lent a paw and they finally got all the water from her cotton-stuffed body and spread her on a low bush to dry.

"I wonder who told us to roll on," mused Dorothy, squeezing the water from her own skirts and sitting down gloomily on a handy tree stump.

"Some interfering practical joker," mumbled the Cowardly Lion, licking his fur vigorously. "No one

in sight now, I suppose?"

"No," said Dorothy, shading her eyes as she looked across the river. "But anyway the water cured our curling."

"Yes, but where are we now?" sighed the lion glumly. "No sign of the blue forest and how are we to find Ojo when we are lost ourselves?"

"I thought Dorothy said she knew all the cities and countries in Oz," snuffled Scraps, raising a soggy head from the bush and looking reproachfully at the girl.

"Oh, hold your tongue," advised the lion severely. "If you had held it sooner, none of this would have occurred. Hello, what's all this flapping overhead?"

"A bird," answered Dorothy, without much enthusiasm. "And it's coming right this way, too."

"It had better not peck me," muttered the Patchwork Girl darkly.

I'll soak it in the silly bill;

I'm soaking wet, but I soak things still!

Especially when they swoop and chatter,

whoo, bird! Shoo, bird, what's the matter?"

"What dreadful slang," murmured Dorothy, as a large, ruffled blue bird circled over their heads and

then settled down on a small sapling opposite.

"Mmm-m.! Breakfast!" whispered the Cowardly

Lion, crouching for a spring. "I never cared for feathers on my cereal, but here goes!"

"No! No! Wait! It has a sign around its neck."

Jumping to her feet, Dorothy moved closer to the sapling.

"I'm a Dicky Bird," announced the card hanging from the bird's scrawny neck. "Follow me," directed a notice on the other side, as Dorothy walked cautiously around to the back.

"Well, shall we?" The girl looked doubtfully at the Cowardly Lion, and the lion, after thumping his tail a few times on the ground and opening and shutting his eyes, got lazily to his feet.

"Might as well," he decided gruffly. "And if this Dicky Bird does not lead me to some breakfast, I'll just make a breakfast of him. The way I feel now I could eat a stuffed owl and enjoy it. Lift Scraps on my back if she's not dry enough to walk." The bird, at the lion's remarks, gave an indignant squawk and then, after looking intently at the Patchwork Girl, spread its gaudy wings and flew slowly toward the west. The lion followed at a leisurely pace, Dor-

othy walking beside him to keep Scraps from slipping off. The sun shone brightly. Dew glistened on the long blue grass, and the morning air was so fresh and invigorating that it was impossible not to feel a bit more cheerful. When the Dicky Bird, after flying through a small wood, alighted on the top of a huge blue brick wall, Dorothy gave a little skip of interest.

"M-maybe there'll be g-guards on the other side of that wall," shivered the lion, as the Dicky Bird disappeared over the top. "Guards with long pikes and halberds!"

"But why would they hurt us?" reasoned Dorothy calmly. "We are not enemies. Oh, look, some one is opening the gate." And some one was, a small nervous some one in an enormous blue top hat and coat. The Cowardly Lion, seeing that the gate keeper was so small, took heart and sprang inside with an ear-splitting roar.

"Oh, my head! Oh, my heart! A lion without a cage!" shuddered the little man, dropping his bunch of keys with a terrible clatter. "Oh, my ears! Oh, my eyes! Oh, my heels and my fingers!"

"How about your toes?" inquired Scraps, pulling herself upright by clutching the lion's mane, and looking at the gate keeper critically.

"I was coming to that, I was coming to that," mumbled the little fellow, and fumbling wildly in his pocket he brought out a small pair of specs and clapped them hurriedly on his nose. "There, there, that's better," he explained, peering up at the travelers again. "Does your dog bite, Miss?"

"Dog?" exclaimed Dorothy, with a little laugh.

"He's a lion and you know it."

"Not now. Not now." The gate keeper looked them over tranquilly. "Through these reducing glasses he looks a mere dog and you girls are almost too little to bother about. Some people wear magnifying glasses to make things look larger. I wear smallifying glasses to make them look smaller. ~mimize your troubles as it were, as it were."

"How about when you eat ice cream?" asked Dorothy in an interested voice.

"Oh, I wear them then, too," confided the gate keeper, clasping his hands behind his back. "Then there's so much more ice cream than you think, it's quite cheering."

"You're a queer one," sniffed the Patchwork Girl, rolling her suspender buttons, "almost as queer as your hat band. Now, I ask you, why wear a girl's sash around the brim of your hat?"

"Because I'm a Dick." Solemnly the gate keeper pointed to a bright flag snapping and curling in the morning breeze.

"DICKSY LAND," spelled out Dorothy, after a little trouble, for the flag was flapping merrily on its pole. "Why, there's a Dixie Land in the United States but it's not spelled like this one."

"Then it's not the same," stated the little man primly. "Here we are all Dicks together. I am the Dick with the queer hat band. That's my peculiarity. To what are you addicted?" he inquired, pointing a long finger at Dorothy. "What's your peculiarity?"

"Why, why-" Slightly confused, the little girl turned to the Cowardly Lion. "I don't believe I have any, that is-" Poor Dorothy, she got no further in her explanation. Without warning or reason she again rolled up like a jelly roll, for the effect of the mischievous road had not entirely worn off.

"Ah, I see," said the Dick, swaying back and forth on his heels. "You curl. Well, that ought to let you in, all right:

"There was a little girl and she had a little curl
Right in the middle of our gateway;
And when she is curled, she is very, very curled,

But I think I prefer her the straight way!"

"Be quiet!" ordered Scraps, bounding off the lion's back and beginning to pull and tug at Dorothy's feet. The lion took hold of her arms and between them they managed to get her straightened out again.

"Why, even her hair curls," mused the gate keeper, looking at Dorothy admiringly. "And that quilted creature can get in on her appearance alone." His gaze strayed slowly to Scraps. "But what about the dog? What's his peculiarity?"

"Breakfast!" roared the lion, who was out of patience with so much conversation. "Breakfast and plenty of it~ Rare roast beef with a capital B. And be quick about it. Who keeps the Cowardly Lion of Oz waiting for his breakfast?"

"Cowardly Lion!" gasped the little man, pushing back his hat. "That is a queer one. Roast beef for breakfast? That would get anyone in. Come along, you'll make a splendid Dick. This way, please!" The little fellow motioned them into a small round house where a small round chef hastily set out an appetizing breakfast for Dorothy, and after a frightened conference with the gate keeper produced three cold

roasts for the Cowardly Lion. Scraps, not caring for food, amused herself in the garden, where the apples grew on raspberry bushes and the raspberries on the apple trees, where the roses were daisies and the daisies were roses and everything was mixed and topsy-turvy.

But Scraps did not mind, for she was that way herself and besides there was a swing. So, swinging deliriously and almost as high as the little house, she soon dried off completely and was in such high spirits when Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion came out to look for her that she went cart-wheeling to meet them. Dorothy, though much cheered by her breakfast, felt terribly uneasy about curling and scarcely heard what the gate keeper said as he accompanied them down the garden path. As a matter of fact, the little Dick was wishing them good-day and after turning them over to a Dick with a queer collar, hurried back to his post at the gate.

"I'll just take you along to the Dictatorium," explained the second Dick, who was short and fat and kept peering up at Dorothy over his collar like Humpty Dumpty looking over the wall.

"Have you seen any gypsies around here?" asked Scraps, as their guide led them down a long, tree-lined lane. "Or of a lost boy named Ojo?"

"There is nothing queer about gypsies, so they wouldn't be here," piped up the Dick promptly.

"There is nothing queer about a boy who is lost. Boys are always losing themselves, so he wouldn't be here either." After delivering himself of this, the Dick subsided sulkily into his collar and paid no attention to the further remarks and conversation of the travelers. Dicksy Land was a pleasant enough little country. Some of the houses had windows where you'd expect to find doors and doors where you'd expect to find windows and often the chimneys stood out of the side instead of the top. But on the whole, it was quite interesting and pretty. There were no women, hence not much conversation. Dorothy decided that this was because men were queerer than women, but I am not so sure about this - The Dicks themselves were odd-looking enough. Some were queer about their shoes, some were queer about their diet. There was one who actually made a living with his pen and another who had once sold an idea to a millionaire. Some looked queer, some acted queer, but they were all gentle and harmless and too much interested in their own affairs to notice the visitors at all

The Dictatorium, when they reached it, was really

a queer but comfortable castle and clattering ahead of them up the blue tile steps the Dick with the queer collar banged open the door and bawled in an important voice:

"Dickus the third, Dictator of Dicksy Land." Then, bowing three times, he announced the others. "Three queers from strange parts, Your Excellency. A curling girl, a cotton-stuffed female, and the Cowardly Lion of Oz."

The Dictator of all the Dicks was young, thin and rather pleasant. When they entered he was sitting cross-legged on his throne reading Dickens, and putting his finger in the book to keep his place, he looked up inquiringly.

"Just how queer are you?" he asked them in a tired voice.

"Your Highness can see that for yourself," said the Dick, jerking nervously at his collar.

"We're not queer at all," declared Dorothy, jumping indignantly off the lion, and then to her complete mortification and confusion, she curled right up like a jelly roll at the Dictator's feet.

"Well, well! I've never seen that done before," observed the Dictator in a surprised voice, and as the Cowardly Lion and Scraps again flew to Dorothy's rescue, he gazed from one to the other with

keen interest and enjoyment. "Do you all promise to regard me as the supreme ruler of Dicksy Land and to obey the dictates of my office at all times and places?" he asked kindly.

"I should say not!" panted Dorothy. By this time the Cowardly Lion and Scraps had her on her feet and with a very red face she returned the Dictator's stare.

"You won't!" exclaimed the young ruler, throwing his book high in the air. You mean to say you defy me?" Springing to his feet he rushed excitedly from the chamber. "Reachard!" he shouted exultantly. "Reachard, come quick! I've been defied and set at naught! At last I have been defied!"

CHAPTER 10

The Long-Armed Reacher

"HE'LL come right away all righty," whispered the Dick with the queer collar, nudging Dorothy. "He's the Dic's Right Hand Man, he is!"

"Right Hand Man! Right Hand Man!" twittered

a couple of Dickey Birds hanging in a cage over his Excellency's divan.

"Well, now we've done it,,," worried Scraps, clasping her arms around the Cowardly Lion's neck. The lion's knees were trembling violently, but moving closer to little Dorothy he prepared to make a stand against all comers. A clatter of hoofs made him prick up his ears and Dorothy gave a little scream of alarm as Dickus, mounted on a great white horse, charged through the curtains at the back of the throne. Easily leaping the throne itself the royal charger came to an abrupt halt before the three adventurers, and with a nerve-shattering neigh began to paw the stone floor with his left fore foot. At the same time a tall fellow, wearing an immense cloak and sugar-loaf hat, stepped through the curtains and solemnly took his place at the horse's head, regarding the visitors with stern and watchful eyes.

"Here they are!" cried the Dictator, dropping the reins and folding his arms dramatically on his chest.

"Do you still defy me?" he asked, thrusting one hand into his doublet and puffing out his cheeks.

"Yes!" Dorothy spoke up boldly. "You see---"

"Even on my white horse?" went on the Dictator, incredulously. "You defy me even on my white horse, in my best uniform and three-cornered hat

with the gold feather? And these others, do they defy me, too?"

"Yes," rumbled the Cowardly Lion, beginning to enjoy himself thoroughly. "Since it gives your Excellency such pleasure. We all defy you, now, later and forever after. We cannot obey the dictates of your office, for we are already loyal subjects of Ozma of Oz and at present seeking far and near for a boy named Ojo who was carried off by gypsies."

"But stay long enough to arrange a little uprising," begged the Dictator, in a pleading voice. "I've never been defied before and I assure you I find it most refreshing. How can I prove I'm a real Dictator unless I quell an uprising or put down a revolt? The trouble here is that no one ever revolts."

"How revolting," murmured Scraps, ruffling up the Cowardly Lion's mane.

"But why pick US to revolute? we neither bite nor fight nor shoot!"

"The lion could bite," said Dickus, pulling in the white horse, who was making playful snatches at Scraps', yarn hair.

"Well, I won't bite this time." The lion waved his tail gently from left to right. "But thanks for asking me."

"Oh, that's all right" Sliding wearily down from his white charger, the Dictator waved it wearily out of the room and sank back on his divan.

"Do you want me to handle matters from now on?" questioned Reachard, bending almost double to whisper in the little ruler's ear. Dickus nodded, looking at the same time so dreadfully disappointed that Dorothy felt sorry for him.

"You must be a really good ruler never to have any revolutions," she told him kindly.

"Yes, do you mean to tell me every Dick in Dicksy Land is perfectly satisfied?" rumbled the Cowardly Lion, putting his head on one side and regarding the Dictator thoughtfully.

"Perfectly satisfied," sighed the Dictator gloomily. "That's the queerest thing about them."

"This is a queer country," giggled Scraps. "I'll come back sometime and spend my life."

"Why go at all?" asked Dickus, brightening up at the Patchwork Girl's reckless promise.

"Oh, we have to go," explained Dorothy quickly. "You see, Ojo is a great friend of ours and he may be in dreadful danger or trouble. Could your Excellency tell us how far we are from the Emerald City, now?"

"You tell them, Reachard," ordered the Dictator,.

with a tired drawl.

"The Emerald City is one forest and one mountain beyond,'" stated Reachard, with a precise bow.

"Oh!" screamed Dorothy, while Scraps' suspender button eyes made a complete revolution. No wonder, for Reachard's hand and right arm, hidden till now under his long cloak, uncurled like a garden hose and with the arm still attached to the shoulder shot through the window and snapped out of view.

"I see you are interested in my Right Hand Man," observed Dickus, as the three travelers stared at Reachard in dumb amazement. "Well, he comes from the famous city of Reach, to the north of here, and like all the citizens of Reach can stretch his right arm in any direction for any number of miles, so that nothing is ever out of Reach for him or for me." As the Dictator finished speaking, Reachard's arm came flashing back, curling up and settling into a neat coil at his side. Grasped in the fingers of his large white hand was a green leaf he had evidently plucked from a garden in the Emerald City itself.

"But how did you see to pick that leaf, with your head back here and your hand way off there?" cried Dorothy, jumping down from the lion's back and staring up into Reachard's face.

"Quite simple," smiled Reachard, extending his hand on its snake-like arm. "I have eyes in my fingers, you see."

"You are a handy man," gulped the Cowardly Lion, trembling a little, for the five black eyes in the tips of Reachard's fingers affected him most unpleasantly. "You can find anything, I suppose, even collar buttons."

"Well, I hope you are honest," put in the Patchwork Girl saucily. "If not, where will we be, with a light-fingered fellow reaching in and out of our windows?"

"Sh-h!" warned Dorothy, as Reachard drew back with an offended sniff. "I am sure he never touches anything that does not belong to him and I am sure he will show us the way to the Emerald City."

"That's just what I was about to suggest," proposed the Dictator, frowning at Scraps.

"But why go back to the Emerald City when Ojo is somewhere around here?" objected the Patchwork Girl, with an impatient flounce.

"Because," Dorothy said, "it is not far, and once there we will have the Wizard's wishing pills to help us. We are just wasting time wandering around this way."

"Right!" agreed the Cowardly Lion, swallowing

uncomfortably as the eye in Reachard's middle finger gave him a broad wink. "And I think we had better start at once."

"Good-bye!" Reachard extended his left and perfectly usual hand to the Cowardly Lion. "Don't worry, I'll take care of you all." His right arm slipped round and round them like the slippery coils of a snake. Controlling her fright and dismay as best she could, Dorothy waited for Reachard to let them go and point the way to the capital. This he did almost at once, and after thanking the little Dictator heartily for his kindness, Scraps, Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion followed the white hand and slowly unwinding arm of his Right Hand Man out of the castle, through the queer country of the Dicks on to a broad and beautifully shaded highway. "I hope he hasn't got ears in his thumbs," whispered the Cowardly Lion, as he stepped carefully along under the undulating arm of Reachard.

"He doesn't seem to have," answered Dorothy, leaning far out to the side to examine the curious hand of their obliging guide. "But suppose we want to stop and rest or have something to eat. What then? Will it stop and wait, or go on without us?"

"Oh, let's wait till we do stop before we bother

about that," advised the lion, trotting along contentedly. "Hello! What now?" The hand, making a little dive to the right, disappeared a moment and came out presently with a large and delicious peach which it politely handed down to Dorothy. Then chucking Scraps good-naturedly under the cotton chin, it resumed its position over their heads.

"Why, I wouldn't mind a Right Hand Man my own self," muttered the lion, beaming with appreciation and interest. "Is that a mountain ahead, my dears?"

"A mountain to mount and a mountain to climb,
As it's high, rough and steep, it will take us some time,"

sang Scraps, and reaching up she caught the arm of their guide and swung herself gaily along by her hands. Then, dropping into her place on the Cowardly Lion's back, she began to plait her yarn hair.

Although the mountain at first glance had seemed quite near, it took them all morning and a good part of the afternoon to reach the base. And during this time, Reachard's hand not only guided them, but opened gates, brushed aside troublesome branches and assisted them in every manner possible. Passing through a small village it picked up sandwiches for Dorothy, meat pies for the Cowardly Lion and all

manner of other refreshing delicacies, including a string of red beads for Scraps. Dorothy was a little worried at the thought of taking things without paying for them. But the shop-keepers in the village were so interested and excited to see a moving arm and a hand with eyes in its fingers that they pressed even more goodies and gifts upon the travelers and ran shouting and cheering after them so that it was a positive relief when they had left the village behind and found themselves again in the open country.

"I do wish we had discovered Ojo first," sighed Dorothy regretfully. "Wouldn't he have loved all this?"

"Maybe he is having adventures too," puffed the Cowardly Lion, for he was beginning to feel terribly tired. "G-girls! I'll have to stop and rest before we tackle that mountain. I'm per-fect-ly punc-tured!"

"What about the hand?" asked Dorothy, as the Cowardly Lion stopped dead in his tracks and waited for them to alight.

"If it goes on, it will have to go without me," yawned the lion, flinging himself wearily under a pin cushion tree at the side of the road. The hand did go on for several yards, then looking back (and how

comical that does sound) it paused and seeing they~ had stopped, waved quite gaily, shot up into the branches of the pin cushion tree and closing its eyes went to sleep, its arm coiling round and round the tree trunk like a serpent. Scraps and Dorothy, after watching it a few moments, sat down to rest.

"First time I ever saw a hand go to sleep," murmured the Patchwork Girl, picking up a ripe pin cushion that had fallen from the tree, and sticking pins in herself for something to do.

"Oh, I don't know," yawned Dorothy, stretching out comfortably with her head in Scraps' lap. "My hand often goes to sleep and so does my foot. Keep watch for us, will you, Scraps dear, I didn't realize how terribly sleepy I was."

"If you were cotton-stuffed like me you would not be bothered with such nonsense," sniffed the Patchwork Girl in a scornful voice. "But sleep away, I'll look after you." Leaning her head against the tree trunk, Scraps hummed a little tune to herself and began to think of all the strange adventures she and Ojo had had on their first trip to the Emerald City. Dorothy must have dozed several hours, for when she opened her eyes it was night and the whole sky was bright with stars. Five of them seemed particularly close and a persistent clicking in Dorothy's

ears made her sit up quickly. At this the five stars seemed to swoop right down upon her. With a little gasp of fright she pressed closer to Scraps. Then she gave a laugh of relief. What she had taken for stars were the five gleaming eyes of Reachard's hand and it was snapping its fingers impatiently under her nose.

"I suppose it wants us to go on," whispered Dorothy.

"Seems to me it's pretty bossy," exclaimed the Patchwork Girl, as Dorothy ran over to waken the Cowardly Lion. "Does it expect us to climb a mountain in the dark?"

"Why, it's almost as light as day," said Dorothy, as the Cowardly Lion, wakened by their voices, rolled over and opened one eye. The hand seemed to be in a great hurry and after waiting a few seconds for Dorothy and Scraps to mount the lion, it swooped suddenly down upon them.

"Don't! Stop! Mind what you're about!" roared the Cowardly Lion angrily, for Reachard's arm had gone round and round them, tying them up like a Christmas package. Now it rose and went snapping briskly through the cool evening air.

"I g-guess it wants to get back to Dicksy Land,"

stuttered Dorothy. "Oh, dear, do you suppose we'll have to go the whole way to the Emerald City like this?"

"What's the difference?" mumbled Scraps, for her head was almost buried in the lion's thick mane. "It's better than mountain climbing."

"Better!" raged the lion, speaking through tightly closed teeth. "That Reachard will hear from me for this! If I ever get my mouth open again I'll fix this meddlesome hand of his." In vain the lion squirmed about, trying to poke his head between the rubbery coils of the flying arm.

"What, bite the hand that leads thee?" reproved Scraps, who was rather enjoying the experience. But talking proved so difficult under the circumstances, and the speed at which they traveled was so terrific that they finally lapsed into silence. After twenty minutes of ~zipping, as Dorothy described the adventure later to Ozma, Reachard's arm suddenly relaxed and slid them gently to the ground. The moon had gone under a cloud, but by the starlight they could see that they were on the broad top of a high blue mountain. The hand, on its limber arm, was evidently bent on looking around and was rustling through the tree tops overhead. With one accord the three comrades made a dive for a small

hut in the exact center of the mountain top.

"I'd rather be left than right, or go through again," roared the Cowardly Lion, streaking toward the lighted windows of the little house. The door, fortunately, was open, and rushing inside, closely followed by Scraps and Dorothy, the lion banged it shut with his tail. At the noise of their entrance a bent and evil-looking old Munchkin, sitting at a small table under a lamp in the center of the room, turned around blinking with astonishment. The hut, Dorothy noted with a quick glance, was simply crammed and crowded with clocks. Big clocks, little clocks, grandfather clocks, grandmother clocks, aunt and uncle clocks, all ticking and tocking away at a furious rate.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded the clock maker, jumping up from his bench. "Ah, I know!" He raised his finger craftily. "You have brought the boy and come to claim the reward. Come, where is he? Have you got him outside?"

"What are you talking about?" panted the Cowardly Lion, sitting down on his haunches.

"Ojo!" hissed the clock maker, tiptoeing stealthily toward them. "Quick, give him to me and the five thousand bags of sapphires shall be yours!"

"Ojo? Sapphires?" gasped Dorothy, tripping over a wooden stool in her surprise and excitement. "Why, we are looking for Ojo ourselves. He's been stolen by gypsies and we have been sent to find him."

"So-oo!" Rubbing his hands unpleasantly together and nodding his head like a mandarin, the clock maker looked from one to the other. "So, you are friends of this little Munchkin and think perhaps to help him? Well; I am Mooj, the Clock Maker. Ho, ho! Stay here and you will see Ojo soon enough.

You would like to spend a little time with me, yes?"

The old fellow's tone made Dorothy shiver, and the Cowardly Lion faced the clock maker with an angry growl. "What do you know about Ojo?" he demanded with bared teeth. "Quick, speak up, or I'll swallow you whole!" The lion trembled violently as he spoke, but kept moving closer to Mooj.

"If you swallow me whole, that will be very unwholesome for you. You will have inside information, yes? But what good will that do you?" Grinning provokingly the old Munchkin fearlessly stood his ground. "Inside information is not so good as outside information. Sit down, and hear my story."

"Well, make it short!" The Cowardly Lion put back his ears and lashed his tail impatiently. "in other words, be brief!"

CHAPTER 11

The Mysterious Clock Maker

WAVING his visitors to a rough bench, Mooj seated himself on a high stool and whittling away at a bit of dark wood began to speak.

"As I told you before," stated the old man grum~ily, "I am a clock maker."

"But why make clocks on top of a mountain?" shouted Scraps, raising her voice above the ticking and striking of the old Munchkin's products.

"Is there not as much time on a mountain top as anywhere else?" asked Mooj loftily. "All you need to make clocks is a little skill and plenty of time. Here I have both."

"Well, we have not!" snarled the Cowardly Lion impatiently. "We don't care about clocks. We want to know about Ojo. What did you mean by asking us whether we had brought him here, and why were you giving us five thousand sacks of sapphires?"

Before Mooj could answer there came a thundering knock on the door, followed by quick raps on the windows and rattlings of all of the shutters.

"The hand!" groaned Dorothy, throwing her arms around the Cowardly Lion's neck. "The hand, it's come back for us. Oh, dear, where shall we hide?"

"This way! This way!" urged the clock maker. Ushering them hurriedly into a small workshop at the back he closed the door. Then, seizing an iron bar, he struck the lion a terrific crack over the head. The lion, though taken by surprise, made a ferocious snap at Mooj. But before his teeth had come together he had changed before the startled eyes of the girls to an enormous alarm clock.

"Ha, ha! Mooj, the magician as well as clock maker bids you beware!" shrilled the old Munchkin, brandishing his rod over the cowering figures. "That knock is doubtless the gypsies bringing Ojo to Moojer Mountain. But you will never know why he has been brought here or what will become of him afterward! "There! And there!"

At the first "there," Mooj struck Dorothy; at the second, Scraps. And now on a shelf above the great alarm clock stood a small French mantel clock and on the wall beside the shelf hung a bright red cuckoo clock that, in spite of its wooden rim and glass face, looked pathetically like the Patchwork Girl.

Leaving them ticking hysterically, Mooj hurried out to open the door. But, to his fright and astonish-

ment, instead of gypsies he encountered the right hand of Reachard. Thrusting the clock maker scornfully aside, the hand on its long elastic arm rushed through the rooms of the little house, opening doors even those of the clocks, dragging aside chests and peering inquisitively into closets. Then, failing to find any trace of its three charges, it seized Mooj, shook him unmercifully, and flashed out the door, slamming it so hard that three window panes shattered to bits and four grandfather clocks fell forward on their faces. Mooj himself was simply stunned. Magician and magic worker though he was, he had never seen an arm and hand like Reachard's -an arm and a hand without an owner. But consoling himself with the thought that he had rendered Ojo's three friends helpless and harmless, he bolted all the windows and doors and sat down to wait for the gypsies; for had not these foolish Emerald City-ites told him that the boy was in the hands of gypsies? Gypsies! Throwing back his head, Mooj laughed long and evilly.

CHAPTER 12

Meanwhile in Glinda's Castle

ABOUT the time Dorothy, the Cowardly Lion and Scraaps were leaving Dicksy Land, Ozma, Uncle Nunkie and the Scarecrow were arriving at the red palace of Glinda, the Good Sorceress of the South. This famous and lovely enchantress is almost as well known and loved as Ozma herself, practising only good magic and governing with wisdom and skill all the turbulent tribes and races of the Redlands. Ozma, convinced that the Cowardly Lion, Scraaps and Dorothy were already with Ojo, had not used one of the Wizard's wishing pills, but had driven south in the royal red wagon drawn by the Sawhorse, a small, live, wooden beast who had been brought to life with the same powder used upon Jack Pumpkinhead and the Patchwork Girl. They had left the Wizard busily adjusting his search light, and feeling sure that Dorothy or the Wizard would locate Ojo before their return, Ozma and her two friends had made the journey quite hopefully and happily.

After welcoming them with great warmth and ceremony with a salute of twenty guns from the red tower, Glinda led her distinguished visitors into the throne room and begged Ozma to tell her the latest happenings in the capital. When Ozma explained the reason for their trip, Glinda looked grave and

anxious and hurried over to the huge book of records padlocked to its golden stand beside her throne.

Turning back the pages to the day before, they all looked eagerly for some entry that might explain the mysterious disappearance of Ojo. A dozen birthday celebrations of various rulers were duly recorded, a small war between the Grigs and Twigs of South Mountain was briefly touched upon, but concerning the lost boy there was nothing at all.

"The King of Seebania is taking steps to secure his crown." After reading this entry the Scarecrow turned to Glinda with a little chuckle. "I had the same trouble when I was Emperor of Oz," he confided reminiscently. "I just could not keep my crown on. It kept slipping down over one eye and wrinkling up my cotton forehead. Why doesn't this King of Seebania use a chin strap and tie it in place?"

"I think this means he is having trouble with his subjects," smiled Ozma, turning the page quickly.

"The same thing," insisted the Scarecrow, throwing his flimsy arm affectionately around Unc Nunkie.

"Anything on to-day's page, Unc?" Unc Nunkie shook his head sorrowfully, for the record of morning's happenings had nothing whatever to do with his small nephew.

"Perhaps Ojo is not important enough to be mentioned in the record," mused Glinda, straightening up regretfully.

"Wrong!" Raising his skinny forefinger, Uncle Nunkie wagged it reproachfully under Glinda's nose.

"Of course he is important to us," put in Ozma soothingly. "But Glinda means that the book cannot record the doings of all the every-day little boys in Oz."

"Not!" disapproved Uncle, turning away to look sadly out of the window.

"I agree with you," said the Scarecrow heartily. "Ojo is not an every-day boy at all, but an every-other-day-but-to-day boy. Here he was yesterday, as lively as a Grig. Where is he to-day? That's the question. I move that we return to the Emerald City, my dear, and see what the Wizard has to report, and then, too, we can look again in the magic picture."

There seemed nothing else to do, and though Uncle Nunkie was too worried to eat and the Scarecrow was not made for the gentle art, Glinda and Ozma had a luxurious lunch on the balcony, after which the little rulers bade each other an affectionate farewell. Then Uncle Nunkie and the Scarecrow shook hands with the clever Sorceress and they all climbed back into the red wagon and set off at the Saw

Horse's best speed for the capital.

CHAPTER 13

Slaying of the Snoctorotomus

AFTER leaving Realbad, Ojo and Snufferbux trudged silently along through the blue forest.

The sun was still high and the air cool and fragrant, but Ojo was so depressed and sorrowful at leaving the gallant robber chief that he found the day dull and uninteresting and did not even look up when a three-tailed squirrel whisked saucily across his path.

Snufferbux, too, felt solemn and serious, for he realized that he and he alone must now protect Ojo from his unknown and dangerous enemies. Picking up a huge fallen branch he stripped off the leaves and with this improvised club peered watchfully to the left and right for signs of gypsies, wild beasts or other hidden perils. This big brown bear was determined to deliver the little Munchkin boy safely to his friends in the capital and then, with a clear conscience, return to the high and craggy mountain peaks of his youth. As Snuffer, in his slow, methodical way, pondered over the strange mystery of

Moojer Mountain and the probable reason for the stealing of Ojo, he broke into the slow shuffle and glide of an old gypsy folk dance. And so strange was the picture he made, dancing gravely through the forest, bowing now to one tree and now another, haughtily circling a clump of bushes with upraised arm or foot, that Ojo, in spite of his low spirits, stopped and burst into a loud roar of laughter.

"Oh, Snuffer, whatever makes you do that?" called the boy, fairly rocking to and fro with merriment.

"Foresight," answered the bear, speaking calmly out of the corner of his mouth as he finished the second figure of his number with a masterly pirouette on one toe. "Do you realize, my lad, that this poor talent of mine is all that stands between us and starvation? So a little practice will not come amiss. If there be on the other side of this forest a town or village, I will take steps to get us food and a night's lodging. Perhaps you, too, can do something strange or interesting?" Ojo, smothering his chucides, admitted that he could walk on his hands and turn cartwheels, and after demonstrating his ability in both directions, he skipped more cheerfully beside the dancing bear.

"But if the Emerald City is on the other side of this forest we won't have to dance for our supper,"

Ojo assured his companion. "You know, Snuffer, I believe we have been on the border of the Munchkin Country all this while, so we cannot be so far from the capital. And when we do get there I intend to ask Ozma to help Realbad."

"Help Realbad?" growled the bear, stamping three times with his left foot and dropping his club so he could clap his paws over his head "He can perfectly well take care of himself, he's been helping himself for years. The best thing for you to do is forget that good-for-nothing rascal."

"Oh, I couldn't do that," exclaimed Ojo in a shocked voice. "After all, Snuffer, he savedos from the gypsies and the blue dragon. And do you remember the way he pommeled all those crystal guardsmen?"

"How about the way I pommeled them?" grunted the bear in a hurt voice. Abruptly stopping his dance he picked up his club and strode sulkily along ahead. The forest was full of little rustles and murmurs, and as Ojo trod hurriedly after Snuffer he became suddenly aware of the constant ringing of a small bell. Faintly but persistently it followed them everywhere. Soon Snuffer heard it too, and pricking up his ears swung around to face Ojo.

"What's that?" he puffed in surprise. "There are no clocks, schools or churches in sight, yet I distinctly hear the ringing of a bell."

"Sounds close," breathed Ojo, glancing around uneasily. "What do you suppose it means, Snuffer?"

"Well," answered the bear jocularly, "bells sometimes mean dinner or lunch. Maybe a picnic basket is about to fall on our heads or maybe a sandwich man is on his way to meet us. But come along, Ojo, it probably does not concern us at all." As Snuffer pushed sturdily through the tangle of vines and bushes ahead, the ringing grew so loud that it fairly made their ears tingle.

"Why, it's the ring! Realbad's ring!" cried Ojo. Holding up his hand, he stared with big eyes at flashing band on his middle finger. Unmistakably and unaccountably, the peals were coming from the golden circlet.

"Quick, take it off!" yelled Snuffer, bounding clumsily toward the Munchkin boy. "Never heard of a ring ringing. Take it off! Throw it away! As sure as I'm Bruin, there's mischief brewin'."

"Oh! Oh! Earthquake!" screamed Ojo, throwing both arms around a small tree. And in truth, the floor of the forest was heaving like the sea, and before Snufferbux could catch hold of anything the

waving mass of green and brown split with a thunderous roar and up flashed the terrible head and long serpent's body of a Snoctorotomus. Ojo did not know until much later that it was a Snoctorotomus. Now he could barely make out the figure of the horrible monster, for its sooty breath was filling the forest with a dense smoke and its hideous howls sent the Leaves raining down in a thick shower. Realbad's ring still kept up its furious pealing, and in addition to this it was sending out sharp flashes from its yellow stone.

"I do believe the ring tried to warn me," shuddered the boy, trembling so violently that he skinned both knees on the rough bark of the tree he was clutching. Snufferbux, close by, was grasping his club in both paws, and as the immense head of the loathsome creature came curving toward him he struck it a mighty blow between the eyes. The club splintered to bits, but the smoke-breathing serpent did not even seem to feel the blow. Seizing Snuffer in its talons it hurled him wickedly over its shoulder and came with a hiss and splutter straight down upon Ojo.

Of all the frights and experiences he had had so far, this was the most terrible. Closing his eyes

tight, Ojo gave himself up for lost. Round and round the boy the monster curled its long, scaly body. Too petrified even to scream, Ojo couldn't help wondering why the crushing weight of the creature gave him no pain or discomfort at all. In such a position it was useless to think, for Ojo could not move or even wriggle a finger, and in a mute sort of despair he waited for what was to come. This wait, I am glad to tell you, was not long. The thunderous roars and snarls of the monster rose all at once to an ear-splitting screech. Its scaly coils suddenly relaxed, and Ojo, breathless and exhausted was dragged out by strong and willing hands.

"What's this, hide and seek?" At the sound of that gay and well remembered voice Ojo looked up, and at the sight of a handsome bronzed face he flung both arms around the bandit's neck. Then peering fearfully over Realbad's shoulder-for it was the handsome outlaw and no other-he saw the severed head of the Snocrototomus on the ground a few feet away. The smoke caused by its noxious breath was already clearing off, and touching the flattened coils of the inert monster with his sword, Realbad explained that it was an earth serpent capable of traveling through the ground as swiftly as a sea serpent swims through the sea, and forced to rise every seven days

to the surface for food and air.

"It quite evidently mistook you for a lunch," exclaimed Realbad, sitting down on a tree stump and drawing Ojo down beside him, for he could see that the boy was still weak and shaken. "Didn't my ring warn you in time?"

"It tried to." Ojo spoke in a low voice, for he still felt uncomfortable at the way they had deserted Realbad. "But how did you know?"

Realbad held up his own right hand and on the third finger Ojo saw a ring similar to his own.

"Does your ring ring when my ring rings?" he asked in astonishment.

"If the wearers are separated," answered Realbad. "You see, these rings are twins and will protect the owners from all bodily harm, and if either wearer is in danger both rings will give the alarm."

"But how did you get here," Ojo took another look at the Snocrototomus and shuddered, "in time?"

"Well," smiled the bandit, "as a matter of fact, I've been following you all morning. I knew my ring would protect you, but when I saw you all wound there like a papoose, I thought I had better take a hand, so" Realbad made a swinging sweep with his sword to show how he had slain the earth ser-

pent. Then, giving Ojo a quick hug, he sprang energetically to his feet. "Now where's that big friend yours?"

"Oh, poor Snuffer! He must be all broken up," cried Qjo. Darting off in the direction the Snocrototomus had flung the bear he began a frenzied search for him. They found Snuffer lying beside a small stream about twenty yards distant, and as Realbad bent over to see whether he was hurt, Snufferbux opened one eye.

"You?" groaned the bear, quickly closing it again.

"Why in fury can't you mind your own real bad business and let honest people alone?"

"But Snuffer, he killed the earth serpent," explained Ojo, giving Snuffer a little shake.

"Easy enough, after I stunned the creature," grumbled the bear ungraciously. Slowly he sat up and after feeling himself carefully all over and finding no broken bones, he extended his paw stiffly to the bandit.

"Thank you very much," he wheezed gruffly. "And now, would you mind going away, far away?"

"But Snuffer," cried Ojo, aghast at such ingratitude. "Don't you know that Realbad's ring tried to warn us? It's a magic ring and while I am wearing it nothing can happen to me at all. That's what kept

me from being crystallized in Crystal City, and no harm can come to me, not even on Moojer Mountain."

"I'll bet Realbad gave it to you for his own bad reasons," insisted Snuffer stubbornly. "Of course he does not want anything to happen to you until he has claimed the reward."

"And quite bright of me, don't you think?" Realbad made a little face at Snuffer and rested his hand on Ojo's shoulder. "And now that is all settled, suppose we have something to eat. When I was hunting for you, I found a couple of other birds." Quickly and expertly Realbad began to pluck and clean two wild fowl he had snared on his way through the forest, and so expert a woodsman was the clever fellow that he soon had the birds roasting merrily on a spit over a hastily built fire. Snuffer who did not care for meat, removed himself as far as possible from the appetizing aroma and lunched morosely on some nuts he found in a hollow tree, but Ojo had forgotten everything but his hunger.

"Did you really give me the ring so you would be sure of the reward?" sighed Ojo, after he had eaten one of the nicely roasted fowl. "Why, that couldn't be!" He interrupted himself suddenly. "You gave it to me before you knew about the sapphires. I be-

lieve you do like me, Realbad."

"Believe what you like," grinned the bandit chief, stamping out the fire. "But be quick about it, for I should not care to spend the night in this place."

"Me neither," coughed Snuffer, coming heavily to his feet. "That serpent may pull itself together and have another swing at us." As you probably know, this was not at all unlikely, as no person or creature in Oz can be permanently destroyed. And soon, though no one could tell how soon, the Snoctorotomus would be as lively and as dangerous as ever. So, first quenching their thirst at a small spring, Ojo and Realbad, with Snuffer grumbling and scolding behind them, set out at as rapid a pace as the denseness of the forest would permit.

Ojo was secretly delighted to be with Realbad again. And looking proudly down at his ring he could not help thinking how handy it would be when he wrestled with the boys in the Emerald City or fell out of the apple tree. And feeling, in the company of the tremendous outlaw, both safe and adventurous, he hoped they would not reach the Emerald City too soon, or before he had other opportunities of testing the ring's magic powers.

As Snuffer had lapsed into a surly silence, Ojo and Realbad had the conversation all to themselves. Talk-

ing of this and that, they came finally to the edge of the forest. Directly ahead lay a strange, walled city, and Snuffer was so relieved to find a town and not a mountain on the other side of the forest that he could not restrain a huge sigh of relief.

"Never climb a mountain till you come to it,"

whispered Realbad, who had quite correctly read the bear's thoughts. Passing Snuffer on a run, he was the first to reach the barred door in the city's wall.~

THIS IS TAPPY TOWN. KINDLY KICK THREE TIMES

directed a sign pricked out in brass nails on the door.

"Snufferbux! Oh, Snuffer! Here's a message for you!" bawled the bandit.

"Why for me?" demanded the bear, coming up to read the sign over Realbad's shoulder.

"Well, aren't you the biggest kicker in the crowd?" laughed the robber, giving Snuffer a good-natured shove. "Come on, it's up to you to kindly kick this door. And I beg you to kick it kindly or it may fall down upon our heads."

"Why don't you?" asked Ojo, as Snuffer dubiously re-read the sign. "Want me to do it? Nothing can happen to me, you know."

"Stand back!" ordered the bear, pushing the boy impatiently aside. Taking a little run forward, he

gave the door three resounding kicks with his bear feet

CHAPTER 14

Tappy Town

AT Snuffer's third kick the iron doors clanked noisily open and the three travelers stepped boldly into the walled town. At first glance it seemed to be but a small, bustling Oz community, with the usual round houses, gay little shops and contented and jolly citizens. But they had gone no further than the first crossing before they discovered an extraordinary difference. Though the streets were thronged with people variously occupied, not a single voice or conversation was to be heard, only the persistent tapping and shuffling of feet. Two old gentlemen before a cigar store were stamping indignantly at one another, and though not a word was spoken Ojo felt sure that a furious argument was in progress. Four little boys about to launch a kite stopped every few moments to do what appeared to be a clog on the sidewalk.

"What's the matter, can't they speak?" whispered Ojo, giving Realbad's leather jacket a quick tug. A

tall, important official was hurrying toward them, and without answering Ojo's question Realbad waited curiously for the fellow to approach. He was dressed as Ojo had been before the gypsies ruined his clothes, in the pleasing blue costume of the Munchkins with its white ruff and broad-brimmed hat. On the band of his hat the name "Stampeero" was embroidered in large white letters and this Ojo thought a very clever notion. Glancing around he saw that all the other citizens of Tappy Town carried their names on their hat bands. But as Stampeero by this time was exactly opposite Realbad, he turned back to see what the man had to say for himself. Instead of speaking Stampeero took three steps with his left foot, three steps with the right, sprang into the air, clicked his heels together and finishing off with a low bow stuck out his right leg. Realbad, puzzled for a moment, did nothing. Then, gradually recovering from his surprise, he reached down and shook the extended leg so heartily that the man lost his balance and sat down.

"Now you've done it!" growled Snuffer under his breath. "Mmm-m! Mm-m! There he goes hot-foot to fetch the guards. Come on, we'd better all shake a leg," he advised, as the disgruntled welcomer disap-

peared around a corner.

"But look, Snuffer, all the signs and street notices are on the pavements," exclaimed Ojo excitedly.

"Yes, and just try to understand them," challenged Realbad, leaning down to examine the raised characters on one of the paving blocks. "They must read these with their feet."

"That's it!" decided Ojo, still fascinated by the leaps and hops of the kite flyers. "And they talk with their feet, too."

"But who can understand them?" sighed Snuffer-bux discontentedly. "And how are we to make them understand us?"

"Here comes Stampeero again," whispered Ojo, "and he's hopping mad, too." (You can see for yourself that Ojo was right.) This time three footmen accompanied the flustered official, and as they hopped and leaped and stamped their way along, Ojo could not help laughing. The first footman's name was "Jumper"; the second footman's name was "Humper," and the third, if one was to believe the band on his hat, was called "Stumper."

"Mind, now, no more leg pulling," warned Snuffer, as the four came to a stern halt in front of them. Under one arm Jumper carried a huge inked pad. This he placed gravely on the ground. Just beyond

the pad Humper placed a large sheet of white paper and taking Realbad's arm he walked him first over the pad and then over the paper. Ojo and Snuffer, seeing what was wanted, obligingly walked over pad and papers in their turn.

"Taking our footprints," giggled the boy, Jumper gathered up all three papers and started with them. The third footman had a tremendous pair of black boots and at a signal from Stampeero he handed the boots scornfully to Snuffer.

"Bear feet are evidently not allowed," teased bad. "Put them on, old Brownie, and see how they fit." With a little growl, but thinking it best to agree to anything in reason, Snuffer sat down and drew on the boots. They were big and soft and comfortable and with a little grunt of approval Snuffer-bux rose to see what was the next idea of these comical fellows. But Stampeero and the remaining footmen, annoyed by the sound of voices, had placed their fingers in their ears and in this awkward and censorious attitude started briskly down the main street of Tappy Town toward a large, light blue castle set in a garden at the end of the avenue.

"Well, I suppose we may as well follow," said Realbad, striding along with amused glances to

right and left. "We may pick up some treasure or useful information and hear something to our advantage."

"You let me handle this," rumbled Snuffer importantly. "I can dance and that is evidently what's wanted."

"Be careful what you dance, then," cautioned Realbad, winking at Ojo, "or you may land us all in the guard house. How do you know what your feet will say, especially in those boots?"

"I wonder what these people are saying about us?" murmured Ojo, as the citizens lined up along the sidewalks tapped out brisk remarks and messages. "My, they must wear out a lot of shoes here. Do you think we could ever learn the foot language, Snuffer?"

"Oh, I dare say it's simple enough, once you get the hang of the thing," grunted the bear. "But what we want to know is where we are and how far we are from this Emerald City of yours."

"And don't forget Moojer Mountain," drawled Realbad, swinging through the palace gates and pausing to admire the beds of lady slippers on either side of the path. Each prong of the garden fence was topped by a silver slipper and the castle chimneys were in the shape of enormous blue boots.

"Isn't this fun?" breathed Ojo, hurrying up the steps after Realbad.

"Don't be too sure of that," grunted Snuffer, lumbering suspiciously into the palace after his two companions. There was no one in the great hallway and the throne room when they reached it was bright and sunny and furnished with both elegance and comfort. Except for an unusual number of footstools, it seemed to Ojo like many other small Oz castles he had visited at one time or another. Seated on the throne were the king and queen of Tappy Town. In jeweled letters on the king's crown was the name "Stubby" and Ojo noted with great interest that the queen's name was "Skippyfoo." Stubby held a silver foot rule in his hand and his face was so round and pleasant that the travelers felt quite encouraged. Their Majesties and all the members of the court had their feet resting on golden footstools.

"No wonder," thought Ojo sympathetically, remembering that they had to use their feet for both walking and talking. Beside the king stood a tall, severe-looking official wearing on his hat the title "Slipper Slapper." He carried a tall stick, and fastened to the stick was an enormous felt slipper that

looked not only well worn but dangerous. Before Ojo and his companions had time to notice anything further, Jumper, the footman who had taken their footprints, bustled into the room and fastened a broad white ribbon around each of their middles. Looking down in astonishment Ojo saw embroidered on his ribbon the words "Lost Strayed and Stolen." Snuffer's had but two, "Dancing Bear," and Realbad's but one, "Footpad." Now footpad, as you well know, is but another word for highwayman, and Realbad was so taken aback and embarrassed by this Uncomplimentary tag that Snuffer could not repress a low chuckle.

"Pretty good system they have here," he whispered maliciously. "Learn all about us from our footprints."

"Oh, do be quiet," warned Ojo, as Slipper Slapper waved his stick threateningly. "They don't like the sound of our voices." The king and queen, who had leaned forward to read the visitors' ribbons, settled back and frowning with annoyance were tapping their feet impatiently on their footstools.

"Well," muttered Realbad, giving the brown bear a shove. "Why don't you say something?" So Snuffer, as their Majesties stopped tapping and looked down at him expectantly, followed the example of

Stampeero, taking three steps to the left, three step~ to the right, clicked his heels together and finished off with a respectful bow. This pleased the sovereigns enormously and smiling kindly they settled back prepared to listen to what he had to dance. Feeling that something quick and lively might serve, Snuffer began the whirling stamping measures of a spirited gypsy gavotte. Ojo and Realbad watched anxiously to see the effect the dance was having on the king and queen and were relieved to see that Stubby and Skippyfoo were laughing and clapping their feet with pleasure. At one particularly dizzy spin, Stampeero hurried from the room and as Snuffer a bit breathlessly brought his performance to a close returned with a tray and three sparkling tumblers of cold Ozade.

"Well, three cheers for you!" approved Realbad, emptying his glass at one swallow. "Keep this up and we'll have a full course dinner soon."

"Oh, some of the rest of you try it," panted Snuffer, burying his nose in the refreshing drink, and as the king and queen were now looking questioningly at Ojo, Ojo handed his empty tumbler to Humper and did a hornpipe he had learned from Cap'n Bill, a one-legged sailor living in the Emerald

City. As Ojo finished and bowed, their Majesties exchanged an amused smile and Stampeero, again hurrying from the room, returned this time with three pairs of blue suspenders. These he gravely proffered to the visitors, and doing a little heel and toe on his own account sat down on the king's footstool.

"Ho, ho! So this is what comes of hornpipes?" rumbled Realbad under his breath. "Good for you, little Splinter! Good for you!" Realbad had not enjoyed himself so much for years. "We've done pretty well so far." He donned the suspenders good-naturedly and helped Ojo with his. Even Snufferbux, entering into the spirit of the thing, thrust his great arms through the giddy braces and in suspenders and boots looked so comical that Ojo doubled up with silent merriment.

On the other side of Slipper Slapper a scholarly looking clerk was making notes of the whole proceeding with an instrument like a telegraph transmitter which he operated with his foot. The signs and characters looked more like Chinese laundry marks than anything else, but Ojo concluded that they must be in the strange shoe-tongue language and turned to see what Realbad was going to say to the monarchs of Tappy Town. The bandit had taken a small pad (not a footpad, however) from

his pocket. Scribbling a brief note on the first page he handed it politely up to the king.

"How far to Moojer Mountain and the Emerald City of Oz?" asked the note. Without even looking at the paper, Stubby threw it on the floor. Then, descending slowly from the throne, he jumped on it with both feet.

"Well, now that he has put the official stamp on your letter, what next?" grinned Snufferbux, giving his suspenders a furious jerk as Stubby climbed solemnly back on his throne. Realbad was disgusted by the king's rude action, but Ojo, picking up the memorandum, saw beneath Realbad's question a neat row of queer little pictures and marks. Thinking it would make a fine souvenir and that possibly the Wizard could read it when he reached the Emerald City, Ojo thrust the note into his pocket and then looked up in some surprise, for the king's Shoe String and Horn Band had begun to play upon silver shoe strings and horns. I do not suppose you have ever heard a shoe horn. Well, neither had Ojo nor his companions and as the king's musicians industriously jerked the silver shoe horns up and down the backs of their musical pumps, stopping every now and then to pluck their silver shoe strings, the

gayest tune imaginable burst upon the ears of the astonished listeners. Realbad, delighted and inspired by the music, decided to oblige with a clog.

Faster and faster tooted the horns, faster and faster the bandit's boots tapped the floor and Ojo and Snuffer, looking on admiringly, hoped his efforts would bring them a bag of jewels or a good dinner. But alas, Stubby's face, registering first interest, then pleasure, then astonishment, turned suddenly as black as a thunder cloud. Bounding off his throne he put his foot down. And let me tell you, when the King of Tappy Town puts his foot down, he puts it down hard. As he trod on Realbad's favorite toe, you can imagine how unpleasant that was. But shocking to say, that was not all. For the big leather slipper wielded by the king's slapper fell with stinging viciousness upon the visitors. Next, every foot in the throne room was raised against them and, so quickly and violently that they only half realized what was happening, they were kicked not only out of the throne room but entirely out of the palace as well. It was so unpleasant an ending to so interesting an adventure that Ojo was stunned. Thanks to the magic rings, the kicks had not hurt either him or Realbad. But Snufferbux was growling with rage and smarting all over.

"Trust you to put your foot in it," raged the bear.

"What kind of dance was that, you dunce? You must have gone and insulted them."

"I thought I was doing pretty good," sighed Realbad, picking up his hat and beating the silver dust from his coat and trousers. "I don't think so much of this foot language, do you, Ojo?"

"I guess it would be all right if you understood it," answered the boy, looking ruefully back at the palace to see whether the king's footmen and courtiers were going to kick them any further. But the back doors of the castle were closed and there was no one in sight but an old Tappity Councillor who was laying down the law on the king's blue highway. All the laws of Tappy Town are nailed down on the streets and walks of the city, for as the people read with their feet it is the best way of having the laws known and obeyed. Snuffer soon became so interested in this odd procedure that he forgot his anger and resentment, and Ojo, bending over the old law worker, tried his best to discover what the new law might be. But Realbad, feeling that their ignorance of the language of the country had caused them enough trouble, urged his companions to move along. It was quite late and growing dark. As they pushed

on through the neat and compact little city they were interested to see that all its inhabitants wore small foot lights which enabled them to see as well as hear what their feet were saying.

"Unc Nunkie would certainly like this place," Ojo said, as they reached the wall. "He hates to talk~"

"Not for me," exclaimed Realbad, swinging open a little gate. "I'd be flat-footed in a fortnight, and imagine spraining an ankle every time you wanted to order asparagus."

"Why asparagus?" grunted Snuffer, peering, as always, anxiously around for a mountain. As there was only a stretch of level country ahead he somewhat relaxed his vigilance. "Let's rest here till morning," he proposed sleepily. "This wall will keep the wind off our backs and it is folly to travel in the dark." As it was now almost nighttime, this did seem a sensible idea, so sitting with their backs against the wall they conversed drowsily for a long time. Then Ojo, creeping into Snuffer's warm arms, slept soundly till morning. Realbad slept scarcely a wink, so busy was he with thoughts of the past and plans for the future. Why was it, he pondered pensively, that this likeable Munchkin boy brought back all the memories of older and happier days before he had become an outlaw? His life in the blue forest

had been interesting and certainly gay, but now it seemed unreal and unprofitable and a very long time ago. Since the disappearance of his band there was no zest in highwaying. Something, determined Realbad, would have to be done about it soon. But what? Should he go on with banditting or give it up forever? Looking affectionately at Ojo sleeping so tranquilly in the embrace of the faithful bear, Realbad came to a sudden decision. He drew out his jewel-handled sword. Now then, let the sword decide for him! Flinging it high in the air Realbad watched anxiously to see how it would fall. It came down point first and embedded itself in the dewy grass.

CHAPTER 15

Lost in a Fog

THE first thing Ojo saw when he wakened was a crackling fire, and rubbing his eyes he wondered why Realbad had kindled a fire in the middle of the night. It was so dark he could just make out the figures of his two friends, and rubbing his eyes again he stumbled sleepily toward the comforting

blaze, for he felt both stiff and chilly.

"Bad morning," called the bandit, gaily waving his hunting knife. "Come along, sleepy-head. Breakfast is almost ready."

"It can't be morning," yawned the boy, sitting down on a big log beside Snuffer. "Look how black it is."

"Blue," corrected Snuffer, moving mournfully over to make room for Ojo. "A pesky fog has come up and we'll be fog-bound for hours."

"Oh, what's a fog in the history of a lifetime?" sniffed Realbad. "How will you have your eggs, Ojo, bard or soft?"

"Eggs?" marveled the boy in astonishment. "Are there any?"

"Certainly!" Realbad peered critically into a tall can of merrily boiling water set among the embers.

"Eggs, my lord, and blueberries, too."

The resourceful bandit had risen long before the fog and scouting along the edges of a stream had found a nest of wild duck eggs. Filling his hat with blue berries and picking up a can left behind by some fisherman, he had hurried back and set briskly to work.

Shut in on all sides by the heavy curtain of the fog, the three wayfarers breakfasted heartily and

comfortably, eating their eggs in English fashion, out of the shells with small spoons that Realbad had picked up in Crystal City. Ojo had often read of the dense fogs that descend at times over the Oz country, but he had never experienced one before and being more interested than frightened could hardly wait to be off. Snuffer, ever conservative, was all for waiting till the fog lifted, but Realbad, reminding him of the level nature of the country they had seen the evening before, was convinced that there would be no harm in pushing forward. So, though they could see but a foot ahead, the three linked arms and stepped cautiously into the thick blue mist. Ojo and Realbad had removed their suspenders and tags, but Snuffer still wore the boots and suspenders he had got in Tappy Town and seemed to find them not only stylish but comfortable as well.

"I hope to hedgehogs we don't bump into any more towns," he muttered, trying to fit his rolling gait to that of his two companions. "Fine treatment we've had from them, I must say."

"Well, the forest wasn't so much better," argued Ojo, remembering his hair-raising encounter with the Snocrototomus. "I say, Realbad, will the rings warn us of danger now?"

"They never ring when both wearers are together," explained the bandit, steadying the boy as his foot slipped into a gopher hole.

"Then that is why they did not ring when Slayrum and Tiny tried to steal me," mused Ojo thoughtfully.

"Oh, well, they'll protect us from actual harm. I wish Snuffer had one."

"Don't bother about me," growled the bear. "I can take care of myself without any magic contraptions, thank you. Hey!" he burst out suddenly, "Were you wearing that ring when we wrestled back there in your cave?"

"Certainly!" answered the bandit calmly. "But I tell you what, old serious, some time we'll try again when I'm not wearing it. How will that be?"

"Just too bad for Realbad," sniffed the bear, looking up sideways at the tremendous outlaw. "But you wouldn't dare!"

"Oh, wouldn't I, now?" laughed Realbad, marching confidently along through the choking mist. "Just you wait till we make camp."

"Now why do you want to wrestle?" put in Ojo uneasily. "What difference does it make who is stronger. You are both brave. Isn't that enough?"

"No!" grunted Snufferbux sullenly.

"If I can just overpower this fellow when he is not

wearing the magic ring and get Ojo safely out of his clutches, so much the better," thought the bear to himself. He knew that in order to cut Ojo entirely off from Realbad it would be necessary to take the bandit's ring also. He hated to deprive the robber-chief of his magic protection, but nevertheless, he resolved to try the plan at his first opportunity.

Then, remembering that Realbad had rescued them both from the earth serpent and made their journey both interesting and comfortable, Snuffer wondered whether it would not be better to travel along with the enterprising outlaw, trusting to chance to reach the Emerald City before they came to Moojer MOUNTAIN. It was all extremely difficult and distressing to decide. The more so because, in spite of his gruff speeches, Snufferbux had grown really fond of the sturdy woodsman. So, with his mind in as much of a fog as the morning, the poor bear trudged unhappily between his two comrades, now deciding one thing, now another. Realbad and Ojo, after trying to draw him into conversation and receiving nothing but growls and grunts finally gave up and devoted all their efforts to the task of making their way safely through the treacherous fog. It was so thick by this time that they could see only an inch before their

faces and after crashing into a fence and stepping unexpectedly into an icy brook, Realbad called a halt.

Cutting three long branches from a tree into which they had bumped with shocking suddenness, Realbad fashioned them with his sword into three limber rods. Taking one himself, he gave the others to Snuffer and Ojo. The bandit and the bear held their rods straight out before them, while Ojo moved his slowly along the ground and in this slow and laborious fashion, and much like blind men, they felt and tapped their way along. As Ojo was thinking how terribly funny they must look, the shrill and unexpected blare of a horn cut through the foggy silence like a knife, so startling the boy that he dropped his rod and flung his arms around Snufferbux.

"Fog horn?" surmised Realbad. "But it couldn't be a fog horn, for we are on land, not water. Do you hear anything else, Snuffer?"

"Drums," wheezed the bear, "or something like drums."

"No, horses!" corrected Ojo, and remembering that he was a brave adventurer, he let go of Snuffer~ picked up his rod.

"Now, then, shall we stand still and keep quiet, or let them know we are here?" debated Realbad anxiously. "If we stand still we may be run down, if we

go forward we may find ourselves in the hands of an army, for where there are horses there are usually men." One thing seemed as bad as the other, and trying in vain to pierce the grim blanket of fog Realbad involuntarily stepped forward. To his dismay and consternation the pointed end of his rod immediately imbedded itself in a soft, yielding body.

"Oh! Oh! I'm stabbed! Destroyed! Punctured!" shrieked an agonized voice that was drowned out almost instantly by a deeper and more threatening blast of the horn they had first heard.

"Halt! Stop! Didn't you hear my horn?" demanded an imperious being, and the air became so fraught with angry snorts, trumpets and whinnings that Ojo turned pale beneath his freckles and Snuffer shook in his shoes.

"Horses! Wild horses! What'll we do?" shivered Ojo. As Realbad hastily snatched back his rod, a silver pike bristled through the mist, so close to the nose of the bandit that he sprang back to keep from being impaled on the point.

"Who dares defy Roganda? Roganda, the fleet, the silver-footed, the magnificent," snorted the same imperious voice. "Who dares?" Ojo and Snuffer exchanged uneasy glances, but Realbad, lowering his

rod, called out boldly:

"A thousand pardons, fair and invisible Queen.

If by reason of this mischievous fog, I have injured you or one of your subjects, I stand not only ready but willing to make immediate and adequate amends." A long silence followed Realbad's offer, and as the three began to move noiselessly backward with arms interlocked, a crooked little hand pushed aside the pike and a dwarf with a long blue beard sprang up before them. He was about the same size as Ojo and over one shoulder he carried a red lantern on a pole. Letting the lantern slide to the ground he quickly lit it and holding it aloft peered earnestly up into their faces.

"Only three, your Majesty," he piped in an important little squeak. "Shall I bring them in?"

"Ye-a!" The answer quivered like a silver whistle through the fog.

"Her 'Yea' is 'Yea,' but her 'Neigh' is terrible. Better come along," advised the dwarf. Picking up his lantern he motioned for them to follow. Ojo could distinctly hear the hammer and pound of countless hoofs clattering along ahead.

"They must be horses," he whispered, looking up to see whether Realbad was going to do as the dwarf suggested. The lantern had decided Realbad. Any-

thing he concluded, was better than blundering help-
less about in the fog, so seizing Ojo by one arm
and Snuffer by the other, he stepped thankfully after
the twinkling light. It made but a small pool of red
in the gloom and not enough to enable them to see
the strange horde they were following.

"Is it an army?" questioned Ojo, peering curiously
at the little dwarf. "I wonder whether there are
many more like him? You know, he reminds me of
the old Gnome King, only he's much pleasanter."

"Thanks!" The dwarf grinned cheerfully over his
shoulder. Ojo had spoken so low he was astonished
to find that the dwarf had heard him. "I'm Pat, the
Prime Patter of her Majesty, Queen Roganda, the
fleet." He held up his right hand.

Fastened to the wrist by a leather band was a big
silver-backed brush. "I lay it on soft or hard, just
as her Highness commands," chuckled the Prime
Patter, trotting along contentedly. "If you please
the queen you'll be patted. If you displease her you
will also be patted-but hard."

"Well, it's not safe to pat a bear, remember that,"
growled Snuffer warningly.

"He couldn't hurt you," whispered Ojo. "He's too
little."

"Think so?" The dwarf with another grin gave a tall tree he was passing a light tap with his brush. Instantly it fell crashing to the ground.

"C-careful!" cautioned Realbad, tightening his hold on his two companions, and without venturing any more remarks the three thoughtfully Accompanied their puny but powerful little guide. They had been traveling through the fog so long that a bright and unexpected glow ahead made them blink with discomfort. The dwarf, was hurrying into an immense enclosure surrounded by trees more grand and enormous than Ojo had ever seen before. A whole house could easily have been set in the trunk of each tree. In the center of the enclosure made by these giant trees stood a lantern bush shedding a soft and radiant light on all sides. For the first time it was possible to see the invisible company they had been following through the fog.

"They are horses!" exclaimed Ojo, tightening his grip on Realbad's arm. "But they have horns!"

"No wonder!" Realbad raised his sword to a blue and flashing sign hung from the lantern bush.

"UNICORNERS," read Ojo, with a little shiver of fright and anticipation.

"And unicorns," added Realbad. "Beautiful, aren't they?" Ojo nodded solemnly, for the hundred snow

white steeds, with flying silver manes and tails and tapering silver horns, swiftly encircling the forest enclosure would make any boy's heart beat faster.

"Pretty is as pretty does," said Snuffer grimly.

"And don't forget, it was one of those horns that came poking through the mist." Dozens of the blue-bearded dwarfs had run out to meet the spirited animals and Ojo quite correctly guessed them to be caretakers. The queen, distinguished from her subjects by a silver crown that grew right out of her head, had for the moment forgotten them. She was talking earnestly with Pat, who seemed to be Head Dwarf as well as Prime Patter. Wary of the unicorns' flying heels and still a bit worried by their silver horns, the three travelers stood as close to the lantern bush as they could, gazing with interest and admiration at what they saw.

The giant trees had been hollowed out to form odd but magnificent stalls for the unicorns. There were a hundred of these majestic forest monarchs and their hollowed centers did not seem to have injured their bark or foliage at all. The trunks of the trees were a soft green and they bore, besides myriads of silver leaves, great clusters of silver apples. At convenient intervals about the enclosure were tree

stumps, and climbing on these, the dwarfs began briskly brushing the glossy coats of their charges. Then, galloping at a furious pace, came the Queen of the Unicorns, sounding her horn as she came.

"It really blows!" gasped Ojo, scarcely believing his ears and eyes. "It blows!" And he backed so far into the lantern bush that he bumped his head on a crimson lantern.

CHAPTER 16

Uniconiers

STRANGELY enough, Roganda did not have to remove her horn to blow upon it, producing the crashing notes by vigorously tossing her head. As backing any further into the lantern bush was impossible, Ojo and his companions were forced to face the music with what courage they could summon. With a final and furious blast, her Majesty came to a sliding halt before them. Now her horn shot out like a silver lance past Realbad's ear and vanished into the lantern bush.

"I am the queen!" trumpeted Roganda, lowering her head and pawing the earth temperishly with her flashing forefoot.

"The queen!" panted Pat, who had lost most of his breath in keeping up with her silver-heeled Highness.

"The queen!" whinnied all the other unicorns in unison, and rather wildly Ojo wondered just what her Majesty expected them to do about it. As her lance-like horn whistled back past his head, shortening to its proper length, Roganda fixed her eyes sternly on Realbad.

"About the amends?" she inquired haughtily. "You, or one of these others, poked Ann Gora, my favorite lady in waiting, severely in the ribs. What do you intend to do about it?" As the queen finished speaking a smaller unicorn trotted forward. There was a large purple bruise on her side and on her face an expression of sullen anger.

"Oh, but that was the fault of the fog," burst out Snuffer, coming hastily to Realbad's assistance. "He couldn't help it, you know."

"I trust her Ladyship will accept my sincere apologies," murmured Realbad, doffing his plumed hat and bowing deeply before Ann Gora.

"Well, Ann?" The queen tossed her head self-consciously. "Will you accept the fellow's apology or not?"

"Not!" shrilled Ann Gora, drawing back her lips

and showing a double row of teeth.

"How mad are you?" asked the queen in an interested voice.

"Wee-gh! Wa-aah! Wu-uuuh!" trumpeted her Ladyship, stamping all four feet and lashing her tail. "Wee-eeh! W~aaaah! Wu-mp!" Ann Gora's outrageous outcries ran up and down Ojo's spine, and Realbad, snatching out his handkerchief, mopped his forehead anxiously.

"Perhaps Ann would like the feather out of my hat, or my belt to wear for a collar?" he suggested hopefully. After a whispered conference with her favorite, the queen threw up her head.

'Neigh!' announced her Highness with stomach-shaking violence. "Neigh!"

"I told you her 'neigh' was terrible," groaned the blue dwarf, covering his ears. "Hurry, think of something else or we'll all be deafened."

"What would your Highness like me to do?" Demanded the bandit in an exasperated voice, as the horrid echoes of the queen's neigh finally died away. After another conference with her lady in waiting the queen spoke, again.

"Ann Gora would like to poke you as hard as you poked her," she stated frankly.

"So---o! This Ann Gora means to gore us," growled

Snuffer, grabbing a lantern from the tree and waving it over his head. "Well, just let her try it."

"Sh-h! I have the ring," whispered Realbad under his breath. "She cannot hurt me but she can poke a real hole in you. Careful, old fellow, this is my affair." Ojo, as ready as Snuffer to fly to Realbad's assistance, subsided at the bandit's words. With horrified eyes and clutching tightly to Snuffer's paw he watched the perverse little unicorn dash at Realbad and thrust her sharp horn deeply into his chest. It came out without leaving even a hole in his leather coat and Ann Gora found the experience so novel that she poked him five or six times before Roganda lifted her hoof.

"Stop!" directed the queen sharply. "He only poked you once, Ann. This two-leg is brave as well as handsome. Pat him!" commanded her Majesty, nodding at the dwarf. "Pat them all!" And turning on her heel, or rather on her heels, Roganda moved off majestically, followed more slowly by her lady in waiting. Ann Gora kept looking over her shoulder at Realbad as if she could not believe he were true.

"Well, if this doesn't beat the gypsies," puffed Snuffer, as the dwarf, with a wink at Ojo, began to brush him briskly with the silver brush. The bear's

fur was dusty and tangled and the brushing felt so good that he gradually became calmer.

"Each of you fellows pick a lantern and let's go," he advised in a low voice, "before any more goring begins. Queens with two feet are dangerous enough, but queens with four feet and a horn are simply im-possible."

"And how she can blow it," shuddered Realbad, shaking his head to get the heart-breaking sound out of his ears. "Do all her Majesty's subjects blow upon their horns and thrust them out like swords?" he inquired, turning to Pat.

"Roganda's the only one who can blow her horn or lengthen it out into a pike," the dwarf told them. "That's why she is queen. And say, why not stay here till the fog lifts? I am sure her Highness is pleased with you now, and whoever eats the silver apples of the unicorns will not feel the pangs of hunger for seven days."

"Sounds like a good idea," ruminated Realbad, glancing up at the tempting bunches of silver fruit. "Besides, we may never have a chance to see this many unicorns again."

"One is too many for me," grunted Snuffer, giving himself a pleased shake as the Prime Patter finished brushing his coat and turned his attention to Ojo.

Pat used a smaller brush on the boy, and it was comical indeed to have his hair brushed and his head patted by a blue-whiskered dwarf. Ojo, like Realbad, was quite willing to stay and see more of this singular forest kingdom. All his life, thought the boy, he would remember the silver shadows cast by the giant trees and the flashing, beautiful bodies of the unicorns moving about in their lovely and leafy enclosure. Near the lantern bush there was a clear and sparkling pool and Roganda's subjects seemed to enjoy more than anything else gazing at their reflections in the still surface of its waters. But Snufferbux cared little for beauty. His years of roaming with the gypsies had dulled his curiosity and made him wary of danger. His one thought was to get Ojo safely back to the Emerald City and return to a life of comfort and ease.

Swinging his lantern impatiently while Pat whisked the dust from Realbad's coat, he again urged them to take lanterns and push out into the fog.

"Wait till we have sampled these famous apples," drawled Realbad, throwing his arm around Snuffer's shoulder. "And we may pick up something else."

"Oh, you and your pickings," snarled Snuffer, hardening his heart against the smiling outlaw.

"Stay if you wish, but Ojo and I are pushing on."

"But Snuffer, I am hungry." Ojo looked up coaxingly. "Look! They're knocking down the apples. now. Why shouldn't we stay and try some?"

The dwarfs, who all seemed to have the strength of giants, were tapping the tree trunks with their silver hammers, and silver apples and leaves were tumbling down in a shining shower. Gathering them up into wicker baskets the dwarfs set the baskets on the tree stumps, and with little whinnies of anticipation and pleasure the unicorns began to nibble at their appetizing fare.

Waiting no longer for Snuffer's consent Ojo ran excitedly after Pat, who had hurried off to serve the queen, and picking up one of the silver apples he bit into it eagerly. It was firm and sweet and like no other fruit he had ever tasted, so delicious, in fact, that he ate five or six more. The leaves seemed to be candied and seeing that the unicorns were munching them with great relish, Ojo picked up a handful and sampled them, too. They were crisp and spicy and much better than candy, and with a little sigh of content Ojo settled down on a tree stump prepared to enjoy himself. Snuffer still stood stiffly aloof, but after one bite of a silver apple, pressed into his paw by a kind little dwarf, he, too, began

to pick up and devour the delicious fruit as fast as he could.

Realbad, walking fearlessly about among the unicorns, who seemed to accept him as one of themselves, had an apple in each hand and a cheery word for everybody. The fog still hung like a heavy curtain about the fairy-like enclosure and, as traveling on for the moment was impossible, Realbad determined to extract as much pleasure from the experience as possible. The dwarfs, fascinated by the huge size of the bandit, followed him in droves, and Pat, the Prime Patter, showed him everything of interest. Snufferbux, waddling behind them in great disapproval, sniffed sarcastically as Pat pointed out the Queen's Treasure Tree. When the dwarfs were not busy serving the unicorns they worked in the mines near Unicorners, Pat explained cheerfully, and liked nothing so much as discovering new jewels for their fleet-footed sovereign.

"A regular king's ransom, eh?" grunted the bear, giving Realbad a malicious poke as the bandit thrust his head into the tree. "Why go further?"

"Why, indeed?" chuckled Realbad, feasting his eyes on the glowing heaps of rubies, sapphires and emeralds that rose in dazzling mounds to fill the

entire center of the immense hollow~ tree. "By the way, where's Ojo?" he demanded, suddenly withdrawing his head.

Laughing heartily, the dwarf pointed over his shoulder. Ojo and a dozen of the unicorns were in an exciting ball game. Ojo would toss an apple into the air and the unicorns, with a rush, would try to catch it on their horns. So quick and clever were the big handsome fellows that they seldom missed, and the queen, looking on with evident pleasure and interest, applauded and whinnied her approval.

"Well, it's a good thing some one in this party keeps his head," complained the bear fretfully.

"Think of that boy's poor uncle, worried and grieving over his absence, and there he runs tossing apples as if he had not a care in the world. And here are you, counting other people's jewels. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!"

"Why begrudge us a little fun?" said Realbad slowly. "The way has been hard enough so far, and here, when a bit of good fortune presents itself, you are all for rushing away. Just think, according to Pat we'll not have to eat again for seven days! That alone is worth a little time and trouble. Let us have a little pleasure, can't you?"

"It would give me great pleasure to wring your

neck," growled the bear, flouncing aside as Pat locked up the treasure tree and scurried off to watch the ball game.

"Oho, so that's your Idea of pleasure? Well, I might oblige you at that. How about that wrestling match? Want to try it again and now?" Snuffer's little eyes gleamed with a sudden hope and purpose.

"Yes!" he snapped shortly. "But no magic rings, remember!" Nodding carelessly Realbad called Pat and asked him to show them a quiet spot. Much mystified the dwarf led them to a tiny clearing back of Unicorners. When he discovered their purpose he stuck his lantern in the ground to give them light and shaking his head disapprovingly left them alone. By the queen's orders the visitors were to do as they wished. If they wanted to wrestle that was their own affair. Pat himself was a peaceful person opposed to violence of any kind, so hurrying back to his comrades he began superintending the removal of the silver supper baskets.

Ojo, tired of his game, had seated himself on a tree stump near the queen, who was reclining luxuriously on a bed of silver leaves. Kicking his heels against the rough bark, Ojo told Roganda the whole story of their travels and all about the capital of Oz and

its curious inhabitants. The queen listened with little exclamations of surprise and astonishment, but when Ojo asked her to tell him the way to the Emerald City she regretfully shook her head.

"I know nothing but this one beautiful spot," she told him frankly. When it is warm we swim in the blue river that bounds the eastern borders of our forest. When we feel restless we climb the high mountains that rise on the other side. As we lack for nothing and have neither friends nor enemies, our life is entirely pleasant and satisfactory."

"But don't you ever feel curious about other places?" asked the boy pensively. "There are so many strange and wonderful cities and countries in Oz. I am sure there is no other queen who can blow her own horn or use it as a lance and I am sure the people in the Emerald City would admire you very much."

"Do you think so?" mused Roganda, tossing her silver mane. "Well, perhaps some day I shall visit this famous city you speak of and see all its odd and interesting celebrities. But remember, if they bore me I shall bore them," finished Roganda, flashing her eyes dangerously. Then growing quieter she gazed dreamily off between the trees, trying to visualize in her lovely but perverse head the splendid city Ojo

had just described to her.

"She has taken a great fancy to you, lad," whispered Pat, coming up behind Ojo. "Stay here with us. I believe I could get you a position as apple thrower and royal cup bearer to the queen." Glancing around at the little dwarfs struggling along under the enormous silver drinking vessels of the unicorns, Ojo shook his head with a little laugh. Being cup bearer, he concluded to himself, was a doubtful honor.

"I would like to stay here, Pat," he confided seriously, "but I have to go on. Hello, here comes Snuffer. I wonder what's the matter. He looks terribly hot and ruffled."

"Matter enough," grumbled The dwarf, and snatching a new lantern from the lantern bush he hurried off on an errand of his own. The queen's eyes had closed. Running up to Ojo, Snuffer lifted him quickly from the tree stump.

"Come on!" he panted under his breath, so as not to disturb her Majesty. "Now is our chance. The fog has lifted and no one can stop us now."

"But where's Realbad?" asked Ojo, noting with a little pang that the fog really had lifted and that there was not any longer an excuse to stay.

"Sh-h!" cautioned the bear, dragging Ojo along by one arm. "Do not even speak of Realbad." The unicorns politely made way for the hurrying bear, but Ojo, thinking how impolite it was to leave without thanking Roganda and discovering what was keeping Realbad jerked angrily back from the bear's grasp.

"I won't go without Realbad," he declared flatly. "What do you mean, running off like this?"

"Our only chance," puffed the bear. "Come on, come on!" Then, as Ojo continued to argue and struggle, Snufferbux picked him up bodily, dashed through the forest circle of the unicorns and out into the broad meadowlands beyond.

CHAPTER 17

The Elevator Man

WHEN he had put a safe distance between himself and Unicorners, Snuffer stopped Placing Ojo on the ground but still keeping a firm hold on his jacket the bear looked at him long and thoughtfully.

"See here," he began, in a low, coaxing voice. "Wasn't I your first friend? Come now, can't you

trust me and depend on me a little? Now, listen.

Realbad has decided to let you and the reward go and take the unicorns' treasure instead. And what a goring and boring there will be when Roganda discovers that, my boy. As I could not reason with Realbad, or stop him, I thought it best for us to get away as soon as possible. Was I right? Once a bandit always a bandit!"

"Oh, so that was it!" The boy's face fell and a lump rising in his throat threatened to choke him. For a moment he said nothing. Then puckering up his lips in a not very convincing whistle he turned away his head to hide the tears that had sprung to his eyes. Realbad had really meant to take him to Moojer Mountain after all! Swallowing convulsively he turned back to the bear.

"Well, you can't blame him," he declared quietly. "Banditing is his business, you know." Whatever Realbad did, Ojo knew in his heart that he would always love the fearless outlaw, and walking along with bent head, as Snuffer continued to mumble and explain, he made his own small plans for the future~ He would, of course, return to the Emerald City and learn from Ozma or the Wizard who his unknown enemy was. Then, after a short visit with Unc

Nunkie he would run away and searching all over the Munchkin Country till he found the bandit's cave he would live in the free forest with Realbad forever! Feeling unaccountably light-hearted and strengthened by this decision, Ojo looked sharply around for some landmark or sign that would tell them where they were. A small mountain lay to the east and another, larger one, lay ahead.

As Ojo reached in his pocket for his handkerchief his fingers came in contact with a crisp paper. It was the note Realbad had written to the King of Tappy Town, and beneath Realbad's scrawled question there were four lines of quite legible directions. It was strange to think that Stubby had placed them there by merely stamping on the paper with his feet, and with surprise and interest Ojo read over the king's instructions.

"From here, the Emerald City lies one straight mile, one crooked mile, one mile up, one mile down, two miles across and one mile over."

"What are you talking about?" inquired Snuffer, looking curiously over his shoulder.

"It's the way to the Emerald City," Ojo said. Carefully smoothing out the paper and reading the directions all over again he explained how the King of Tappy Town had answered Realbad's note. "We prob-

ably went the straight and crooked miles in the fog," reasoned Ojo thoughtfully. "That mountain ahead must be the mile up and the mile down; then two miles across and one over and there we'll be. Why, it's not far at all, Snuffer. Come on!"

"Now you're talking," approved the bear, in a relieved voice. "At this rate we ought to be in the capital to-morrow night for dinner."

"We won't need any dinners for seven days," Ojo reminded him solemnly. "Oh, dear, I wish I'd had time to gather some of those silver apples for Ozma and Dorothy. Say, by the way, Snuffer, whatever became of your suspenders?" Though the bear still wore the boots, the blue suspenders were strangely missing.

"They bothered me," Snuffer told Ojo, after a short silence. "When a fellow's fur grows on his back he doesn't need braces to hang it to."

"No, I suppose not," agreed Ojo. "I wish I could grow a new coat. This one is a perfect wreck."

"If I ever get my claws on those gypsies again I'll clump them good for the way they treated you," promised Snuffer, bristling with anger at the mere thought of the way the rascals had pommelled Ojo.

"Well, I hope we don't meet them now," said the

boy, swinging along energetically. "But I do wonder what became of the bandits."

"Oh, they've probably found their way back to the cave and will be there all ready to welcome Realbad when he returns with the unicorns' jewels," predicted Snuffer, lumbering contentedly after Ojo. "Is that mountain getting nearer, or do my eyes deceive me?"

"No, it really is nearer," said Ojo. "We ought to be there in ten minutes anyway and if we hurry we can climb it before dusk and spend the night on the top."

At the prospect of a night on the mountain top, Snuffer put back his ears and began to gnaw his lip in nervous agitation.

"I wish there were no mountains between us and the Emerald City," he sighed gustily. "I'd give my best tooth if we were safely on the other side."

"Oh, stop worrying," advised Ojo easily. "Every mountain in Oz can't be Moojer Mountain. We're way off the path of it, as I remember from the map back in the bandits' cave."

"I hope you're right," gulped Snuffer earnestly, "for here we are." Glancing up at the mass of blue rocks and trees rising steeply above, the bear gave his leather belt a determined hitch and prepared to ascend.

"Anyway, I still have Realbad's ring," observed

Ojo, squinting thoughtfully aloft, "so nothing very bad can happen to me. And I'm glad Realbad still has his ring, for then if anything happens to him, I shall know it." Snuffer's paw flew involuntarily to the pouch attached to his leather belt and he looked uneasily down at Ojo.

"What would be the use of that?" he asked irritably.

"Why, then I could go back and help him," said Ojo brightly, "or ask Ozma to help him."

"A fine help you'd be." The bear wiggled his nose rapidly. "What do you suppose Realbad did before he knew you? Forget about that big bandit, can't you, and let's get on with the climbing."

"How about a lift?" The low husky question, bursting upon them so unexpectedly, made both Ojo and Snuffer jump. A door in the smooth rock surface to the right had noiselessly opened and standing in the doorway was a tall, serious-looking fellow in a bright blue rubber suit and box hat.

"Pando's the name," he murmured politely, as Ojo and Snuffer continued to stare at him in surprised silence. "X. Pando, to be perfectly correct. This way, please."

"And suppose we don't please?" said Snuffer in a surly voice.

"Oh, but I think you will," answered Pando, taking off his little boxed cap and smiling at them pleasantly. It will save you so much time and trouble. I'm an Elevator Man, you see and will take you quickly to the top of the mountain, for a small fee---a mere trifle," he finished, glancing modestly into his cap and then clapping it on at a rakish angle. Snuffer still continued to look suspiciously at Pando, for in his travels, mostly over rural Oz, he had never come across any elevators and did not know what they were. But there were many elevators in the Emerald City and Ojo was quite familiar with these modern conveniences, so standing on his tip-toes he tried to look past Pando into the narrow rock aperture.

"Where is it?" he demanded eagerly.

"What?" inquired Pando, stepping quickly out of the doorway.

"The elevator!" explained Ojo, thrusting his hands in his pockets and bending over to have another look in the doorway.

"Why, Pm ashamed of you!" X. Pando gave Ojo a reproachful glance. "An Elevator Man does not use an elevator. He is an elevator." Touching the top button on his coat Pando shot up like an accor-

dion, up, up and out of sight, till all Ojo and Snuffer could see were his twinkling blue legs.

"I don't like this," confessed the bear, shuffling uneasily. "Let's get away before he comes down."

"But he seems so polite," objected Ojo, thrilled to think how many wonderful stories he would have to tell Betsy Bobbin and Dorothy when he got back to the Emerald City. "And maybe he can tell us the name of this mountain." As Ojo finished speaking, X. Pando, with a little click and bounce, let himself down.

"The suit is rubber," he explained importantly, "the finest blue Munchkin rubber, capable of expanding to any size and guaranteed against cracks, splits and punctures."

"But how do you manage to shoot up that way?" asked Ojo, who felt that the suit was much less remarkable than its wearer.

"Well, that," answered Pando, thrusting his thumbs complacently beneath his armpits, "that is my secret, a gift I inherited from my dear father. But come, we're wasting time. What will you give for a lift up Bear Mountain?"

"So that's the name of it," cried Snuffer in great relief. "Is it a bare mountain or does it only bear

that name? And- what would you charge to take a bear and boy up Bear Mountain?" Snuffer, as you can see, was growing quite jocular.

"What have you got?" asked the Elevator Man practically. "How about the boy's ring?" he suggested, after looking the shabby travelers carefully up and down.

"Oh, I couldn't let you have that." Ojo was distressed at such an idea. "It was given to me by a great friend. Anxiously he fished in all his pockets to see whether he had anything of value to offer but found nothing but a bent fishing hook and a couple of marbles. Pando, after a short look at the marbles, began to move quietly away from them. Halfway to his little rock enclosure, he paused.

"Although you possess nothing of value to give me, perhaps you can do something strange or interesting," he suggested hopefully.

"Oh, yes! My, yes!" puffed Snuffer, bounding forward with alacrity. "My, yes! Yes, indeed! I can dance!" he admitted pompously. "Just let me show you a simple little waltz or gavotte."

"A waltz? Why, I love to waltz!" Taking off his cap, the Elevator Man tossed it recklessly over his shoulder and rushed toward Snuffer with outstretched arms. "Come along, you. old rascal," he

invited eagerly. "Get started, get started!"

"Oh,~ let's walk up the mountain," exclaimed Ojo in disgust. It seemed too utterly silly for Snufferbux to be waltzing when there was so much traveling to be done. But X. Pando and the bear, now scarcely aware of his presence, were whirling and twirling in graceful circles. Sometimes Snuffer whistled, sometimes Pando whistled, and seeing there was no stopping them, Ojo sat glumly on the rock waiting for the absurd performance to end.

Angry as he was, he soon had cause for laughter, for Snuffer, embracing his partner too vigorously on one of the turns, touched the top button of his coat and both zipped unexpectedly into the air until Snuffer was out of sight. Only Pando's blue legs continued to waltz and just as Ojo began to grow worried he dropped down to his normal size. Snuffer's eyes had a wild and betrayed look. Dropping the Elevator Man's hand he stepped away from him.

"Always rise on the third count, but not that high, not that high," quavered the bear, shaking his head reproachfully. "Come along, Ojo, I think we'd better walk after all."

"No! No! I insist on giving you a lift," cried Pando, wiping his beaming face on a neat rubber hand-

kerchief. "I positively owe it to you. I never experienced a more delightful waltz in my life." Stuffing his handkerchief back into his pocket, he picked up his cap and fairly pouncing upon them touched the top button of his coat and elevated himself and his companions to the dizzy level of the clouds. After the first two hundred feet, Ojo closed his eyes. Then, feeling an unmistakable sinking sensation, he quickly opened them again. To demonstrate to the full his ability and skill, the Elevator Man had carried them high above the top of the mountain. Then, lowering himself with gentle little jerks, he set them proudly on the mountain top and politely tipping his cap sank out of view.

"Well, that wasn't so bad," said Ojo, looking over at Snuffer, who still seemed dizzy and dazed. "If we go down this mountain as quickly as we came up we'll be in the Emerald City in no time."

"Yes, but what's that noise?" grunted the bear, straightening up anxiously. "Or is my head still buzzing?"

"No, I hear a funny noise, too," admitted Ojo. "Sounds like clocks, hundreds of clocks, ticking all out of time. Why, there's a little house, Snuffer, right beyond that fringe of trees! Maybe an old mountaineer lives here and will tell us whether we are

on the right path. Come along!"

"Hold on a minute! Be careful, now," rumbled Snufferbux, thudding heavily after Ojo. "No use taking any chances."

But Ojo had already reached the little mountain hut and was knocking briskly on the door. It was unbarred so swiftly that he almost tumbled through. A bent and hideous old Munchkin stood in the opening examining him sharply. Then, glancing with alarm and evident distrust at the big brown bear behind Ojo, he reached out a long skinny arm, snatched the boy through the door and slammed it hard in Snuffer's face.

"Stop!" roared the bear. "Stop! Unhand that boy! Let me in, d'ye hear?" Snuffer pounded on the door with all of his strength. But not a sound came from the other side, not a sound but the mingled ticking of a hundred clocks.

"That's queer," panted the bear, and running around to the side he tried to look in the windows. But they were all closely shuttered and as he returned to have another try at the door, a second-story window opened and a perfect bombardment of small sacks began to cascade to the ground. Jumping back just in time to keep from being buried un-

der the avalanche, Snuffer clutched his middle with a groan of frenzied despair. One of the sacks had split open and a shower of twinkling sapphires rolled at his feet. Faster and faster the bags tumbled and shot from the window till the heap rose as high as the little house itself.

"Oh! Oh!" moaned poor Snuffer, rocking back and forth with fright and grief as the last bag fell with a spiteful thud on the top of the heap. "I've brought the boy right to the wrongest place in Oz and delivered him straight into the hands of his enemies. This is Moojer Mountain or my name is never Snufforous, Buxorious, Blundorious Boroso!"

"Right!" answered a harsh voice, and looking up the bear saw the hideous old Munchkin leaning out of the window. "Now as you have what you want and I have what I want, suppose you go away," rasped the old clock maker. "Go away, go away at once!" he finished venomously.

CHAPTER 18

On Moojer Mountain

As soon as the old clock maker had Ojo safely in-

side the hut, he again looked him carefully up and down. Then, giving a hoarse croak of triumph, he seized a stout rope and in spite of the boy's cries and struggles bound him fast and tight. Then, shoving him roughly into the little room at the back of the shop, he went clattering upstairs to fling the sacks out to Snuffer. All this happened so quickly that Ojo scarcely knew what to do or to think. The loud and confused ticking of the clocks made thinking impossible anyway, but as a small rag bird bounced out of a red cuckoo clock on the wall and settled on his shoulder, Ojo jumped in good earnest. "Oh! Ojo! Oh, no! On go!" piped the cuckoo in shrill warning. Now, where had he heard that voice before? And what was the incessant low growling rising above the ticking of the other clocks? It seemed to come from the huge alarm clock on the floor at his feet and dropping heavily to his knees Ojo stared wildly into its shiny face. Honest yellow eyes were looking at him sorrowfully through the glass, and on the shelf above his head a little French mantel clock began striking so violently that it almost bounced off the shelf. Ojo's hands were tied behind his back and his feet were bound so close together that he could take only the smallest steps.

Straightening up with great difficulty he looked despairingly around him.

"It's Scraps!" buzzed the little red bird on his shoulder. "Don't you know me? Go away! Go away quick! This man means to destroy you. He has changed Dorothy to that mantel clock, the Cowardly Lion to an alarm clock and look at the rest of me!" wailed the cuckoo, flapping her cotton wings at the red clock on the wall. "It is Mooj, the magician, I tell you. Go, go now, before it is too late."

Too late! With sinking heart, Ojo realized that it was already too late. He and Snuffer had walked Unwittingly right into the arms of the enemy. If the clock maker was Mooj, then this must be Moojer Mountain. The doors and windows were locked and he himself was quite helpless. Putting his cheek down to touch the little red bird that was Scraps, and waving tremulously to his other two anxiously ticking friends, Ojo dropped down on a rough bench to wait for the old man's return. The thumps and bangs of Snuffer had been alarming enough but now footsteps came thumping straight for the room. Horrors! What next? With a tremendous crash the door burst open and Mooj, followed by three others, came hurtling into the crowded little workshop.

CHAPTER 19

The King of Seebania

WHILE Ojo was helplessly waiting in the little back room of the hut, Snuffer, paying no attention to the orders of the old clock maker to go away, hurled himself again and again at the door. But the cabin was so sturdily built that it resisted all his efforts to break in. Sinking finally in an exhausted heap beside the great mound of treasure, Snuffer tried to think of some other way to rescue his small companion.

"So, ho! Claimed the reward yourself, I see!" At these words, spoken in low but distinct voice, the bear almost jumped out of his bear skin. Worried and engrossed with his own dark thoughts, Snuffer had not even heard the clatter of hoofs on the mountain side, and now he gazed in a sort of stupor at the figure before him. It was Realbad, nonchalant and gay as ever-Realbad, mounted on Roganda, Queen of the Unicorns.

"Behold the honest bear who would save Ojo from the wicked robber chief," murmured the outlaw, springing lightly to the ground, "the honest bear,

surrounded by his ill-gotten treasure!"

"Shall I run him through, or simply trample upon him?" whinnied Roganda in a stern voice.

"I deserve both," groaned poor Snuffer, leaning disconsolately against the little house and turning away his head from the accusing eyes of the bandit. "I let Ojo run right into this. DQ you realize that we are on Moojer Mountain? And now nothing can be done! Nothing! But you know I meant to take Ojo to the Emerald City. You know that," insisted the bear broken-heartedly.

"Of course I know it!" Realbad, stepping closer, gave Snuffer a resounding thump between the shoulder blades. "Even when you tied me up with those blue suspenders instead of wrestling, even when you took my ring, I knew you thought it was all for the best. We all make mistakes," went on Realbad generously. "How were you to know that I had changed, that Ojo means more to me than all the treasure in Oz. So I forgave you at once, but feeling that you might need help I came as soon as Pat released me. Roganda kindly offered to carry me on her back, and here we are! We've ridden like the wind. Come, buck up, we'll save Ojo yet!"

Feeling in his leather pouch, Snuffer pulled out the robber's ring and without a word handed it back

to him. It had been exactly as Realbad had said. As soon as the bandit had removed his magic ring, Snuffer had fallen upon him from behind, bound him securely with his suspenders and, making up the story about the unicorn's treasure, had dragged Ojo off to safety - or what he supposed to be safety. But Realbad seemed really ~ have forgotten and forgiven the unfortunate business and, pulling the sorrowful bear to his feet, he turned determinedly toward the little hut

"Now then, all together!" he ordered shortly.

"Let's break down that door." Roganda, with a furious neigh, sent her silver horn crashing again and again through the heavy oak timbers until, weakened by the gaping holes, it went crashing down under the weight of Realbad and Snufferbux. Sweeping into the front room with the miserable old magician just three jumps ahead of them they pelted into the back workshop. Here, with outflung arms, Mooj turned and confronted them.

"Stop!" shrieked the old man defiantly. "One step more and you will be in my power forever, transformed, enchanted, bewitched and destroyed." As Mooj finished speaking Realbad stopped in his tracks.

"You !" choked the bandit, recoiling with disgust

and horror. Roganda, on the point of sending her horn through the miserable magician, turned inquiringly to Realbad, but Snuffer, rushing past all three, threw his arms around Ojo. The clock maker, as he returned Realbad's steely gaze, seemed to kindle and burn with wicked excitement.

"You!" he quivered in his high cracked voice. "You have dared to return! Then watch out! You know the penalty!" For the first time since he had known Realbad Ojo saw the bandit turn pale and actually tremble. But he recovered quickly, tore off his plumed hat, threw it over his shoulder, and made a savage lunge at the old magician.

"How dare you touch this boy? What do you want with him? Why have you offered a reward for the capture of Ojo, a harmless little Munchkin?"

"Because," screamed Mooj, leering up evilly at the tremendous outlaw, "because he is the king's son and when he is safely out of the way I shall be Ruler of Seebania forever and even longer."

"You lie!" rasped Realbad, taking Mooj by the collar and shaking him like a rat. "The King of Seebania has no son and well you know it!"

"Ho, ho! I know it, do I? Well, this time I know more than the king, for a son was born after the king's banishment and spirited away by his great

uncle. But I have my magic and ways of knowing and I traced him to the Emerald City. Then I offered this reward to all the roving bands in Oz, and here he is. I shall serve the son as I served the father and the grandfather and the queen, too. Forfeit! Forfeit! You have broken your word and the queen's safety is forfeit. She, too, shall vanish and disappear!"

As Ojo, Snuffer, Roganda and the bewitched rescuers from the Emerald City tried to understand the old magician's screaming sentences, he squirmed out of Realbad's clutches and dashing the lantern out with a blow from his long rod, plunged the little room into complete darkness.

"Ojo!" called Realbad in an anguished voice. "Ojo! My son!" But no voice came to answer him and, when a few moments later the outlaw succeeded in lighting the lamp, Ojo and Mooj had both vanished. "Magic!" quavered Roganda, looking around nervously. "I thought the practice of magic was forbidden in Oz except harmless magic like this. The queen blew a few frightened notes on her silver horn, then sent it splintering through one of the shuttered windows. "Where is that poor boy now? And why are we standing here doing nothing?"

"Because nothing can be done," groaned Realbad, flinging himself down on the bench beside Snuffer and covering his face with his hands.

"Look here, what's the meaning of all this?" panted the bear. "Did I hear that fellow say that Ojo was a king's son? And you, you called Ojo 'Son.' Are you really the King of Seebania, and Ojo's father?" Realbad nodded without lifting his head.

"And to think I never knew I had a son," he groaned heavily. "To think I find him only to lose him again."

"Help! Help! Help" screamed the cotton cuckoo, flying in wild circles around Realbad's head. We're all bewitched. Don't stand here like dummies, go for help!"

"More enchantments," wailed Snuffer. "But come on, the bird is right. This is no way to act Come along, King, we can still go to the Emerald City and ask the Wizard of Oz to help us."

"No, no, everything is ruined. Don't you understand, if I reveal what has happened to me, the queen, my wife, who is still in Seebania, will be destroyed by this terrible old magician. My hands are tied, I tell you. Tied!"

"Well, I have no hands," declared Roganda, beginning to paw the floor with her small silver hoof. "I,

myself, will go to the Emerald City and appeal to the ruler of all Oz."

As Roganda swung round to gallop through the door, a blinding light flashed through the little hut, settling in a round spot of brilliance on the place where Ojo had been seated. Fearing that Mooj had returned and meant further mischief, Realbad and Snuffer leapt to their feet, and the Queen of the Unicorns, lowering her head, made ready to impale the wicked fellow on her horn. But it was not Mooj who came stepping stealthily into the hut. It was a little bald-headed man with a black bag. He was carrying what appeared to be a telescope and from the end of the telescope the blinding light was issuing. After him tiptoed a thin, white-bearded old Munchkin and a young and lovely dark-haired Princess with a tall Emerald crown.

"Ozma!" twittered the little rag cuckoo, dashing herself against the lovely girl's shoulder. "Save us! save us! We're all enchanted, tick tick, and Ojo's gone forever!"

"No time, no time! We must follow the light!" mumbled the Wizard—for of course it was the little Wizard of Oz himself. "If we stop now we'll never find the boy!" Without looking up or paying any at-

tention to Roganda, Realbad or Snuffer, the Wizard tramped through the house and out the back door.

"Then take us with you," screamed Scraps, flapping her wings angrily. "There, that red clock on the wall is the rest of me, that big alarm clock is the Cowardly Lion and the china clock is Dorothy. These others are Ojo's friends, so let them come, too."

"All right! All right, hurry along!" called the Wizard over his shoulder. "If this light goes out everything is ruined."

Snuffer, quick to catch an idea, handed the china clock to Ozma, the alarm clock to Realbad, and snatching the red cuckoo clock from the wall, went staggering through the back door after the little Wizard of Oz. A hoarse cry made him swing round.

"Alla Bad, my dear nephew! I thought you were destroyed!" Unc Nunkie, with both arms around the tall outlaw, was weeping unashamedly and using more words at one time than Dorothy had ever heard him use before.

"Uncle Stephen!" The bandit lifted the old gentleman off his feet and looked delightedly into his eyes. "And I thought they had done for you, too. Was it you who took Ojo from Seebania and until now saved him from our enemies?" The old man nodded silently. Then, with his fingers to his lips,

he motioned for them all to follow.

"Alla Bad! So that's your real name!" puffed Snuffer, taking a firmer hold on the cuckoo clock and dropping back beside his erstwhile comrade.

"Ree Alla Bad!" whispered the outlaw, in something like his old joking manner. "Realbad to you, old fellow! May I thank your Imperial Highness for this interference in my behalf?" he murmured in the same breath, sweeping off his hat as the little Princess Qf Oz hurried by.

"Oh, wait till I really have helped you," begged Ozma in her gentle, serious way. "Are you a friend of Ojo's?"

"He's Ojo's father!" burst out the bear, nearly beside himself with excitement. "He's a bandit, a highwayman, King of Seebania-and what else, you long-legged rascal?"

"A brave and charming gentleman," whinnied the unicorn, trotting sedately at Realbad's side. "A brave and charming gentleman!" Ozma looked from one to the other in dazed astonishment, then began whispering earnestly in the Wizard's ear.

"Yes, yes!" muttered the little man, only half attending. "Yes, yes! Here, give them each a flying pill, my dear. No use sliding down this mountain.

The light is still going on!"

So, without explaining, Ozma turned back and gave each member of the little company one of the Wizard's famous flying pills. And they, without question, swallowed them down and sailed as lightly as birds after the Wizard's search light, carrying the three whirring and ticking clocks along with them through the air.

CHAPTER 20

The City of Shamsbad

SNUFFER should have been used to strange experiences by this time, but, clutching the Cuckoo Clock as he straddled awkwardly through the air, he wondered if he should ever again feel the good earth beneath his feet. Roganda enjoyed the sensation to the fullest extent and, like a strange, mythological creature of the past, sped through the midnight air. The Wizard's search light, sparkling just ahead of them, began all at once to point downward. Snuffer saw with a groan of apprehension that they were over a many-spired and splendid city. Closing his eyes, for he could not imagine coming down safe and unhurt among so many points and pinnacles, Snuffer

hugged the clock convulsively and waited for the first prick. But he landed as lightly as a thistle on the-golden steps of a brilliantly lighted castle. Still dazed and unbelieving he teetered back and forth. Then, seeing the others racing up the steps, he took a firmer hold on the clock and made bold to follow. Through the halls of the palace, as grand and imposing as any in Oz, the Wizard and his strange companions hurried breathlessly. The search light, growing brighter every moment, led them straight into a massive throne room with a domed ceiling. And there, on the huge, sapphire-studded throne sat the shriveled figure of Mooj, the magician, ridiculous in a tall crown and velvet mantle. Before the throne, bound, but still erect and defiant, stood Ojo, and beside the little Munchkin was a tall, weeping queen robed all in silvery satin. A heavy chain had been slipped around her waist and two sorrowful-looking guards held the ends. As the Wizard's search light flashed over the room and came to rest on Ojo, Mooj sprang up and stamping his feet began to make weird and menacing passes in the air. Ozma, realizing at once that he was trying to enchant them, Quickly touched her magic belt, spoke a few low words, and instead of Mooj a small sparrow hopped

impotently up and down on the velvet cushions of the throne. A silken cord bound it to the arm, for even as a sparrow a magician like Mooj is not to be trusted. Then, and then only, did the little fairy ruler release Ojo from his bonds. Realbad, brushing aside the guards, dragged the chain from the queen. Snuffer was so astonished at all these happenings that he dropped the clock with a bang and the cuckoo, flying out with an angry screech, bit him severely on the ear.

"It's about time somebody thought of us," raged the little bird, bouncing up and down on Snuffer's shoulder, and Ozma, heartily agreeing, touched her magic belt and quickly restored Dorothy, the Cowardly Lion and Scraps to their proper shapes. The lion, hiccoughing violently from the effects of the ticking no doubt, immediately sat down and wrapped his tail like a bandage around his aching head. Scraps collapsed in a heap beside him, but Dorothy, rushing forward, begged Ojo to tell them all that had happened since the gypsies carried him off. Realbad was gazing into the eyes of Isomere, his queen, as if there were no one else in the castle.

"Will somebody please say something?" begged Snuffer, leaning heavily against a jeweled pillar.

"Where are we, who are we? Speak, before I die of

curiosity." The bear's agitated question seemed to bring Realbad out of his daze. Letting the queen's hands go he dropped down on the steps of the throne and drew Isomere down beside him. Then, with one arm around Ojo, he faced the silent and curious company.

"Now at last I can speak," sighed Realbad, looking quizzically over his shoulder at the struggling sparrow. "Now at last it is safe for me to tell the whole story."

"Oh, Realbad, are you really-really my father?" asked Ojo, giving the bandit an ecstatic squeeze. Of all the strange discoveries and happenings, this seemed to the boy the most thrilling of all. "But I was coming back to you anyway!" he stated calmly.

"Were you really?" asked the bandit wistfully, drawing Ojo closer.

"Oh, do begin at the beginning and go straight on to the end," begged Dorothy, sitting on the step below Realbad and making room for Scraps beside her, "and let's all sit down and be comfortable."

Ozma had already seated herself in a high-backed satin chair with her hand resting lightly on the lovely mane of the unicorn. Hastily grouping themselves around the throne, the others prepared to listen with

all ears to Realbad's story.

"Long ago," began the former outlaw slowly, "before her Royal Highness, Princess Ozma, became ruler of Oz, the Kings of Seebania ruled all the southern part of the Munchkin country, and the city where you now find yourselves is Shamsbad, the capital.

When Ozma succeeded to the throne and quite naturally and rightfully chose her own leaders for the various countries of Oz, my father, then King of Seebania and his brother, Prince Stephen," Realbad smiled affectionately at Unc Nunkie, "relinquished their claims to all the small countries of the south and retired within the borders of Seebania itself.

This kingdom, still an immense but little known tract of wild forest land, is bounded on the north by the Munchkin River and on the south by the Quadling Country. Here, within the borders of their own kingdom, these brothers ruled contentedly and peacefully until the arrival of an Old wise man from the north.

"This fellow, whose name you already know, worked his way by flattery and clever tricks into the good graces of the king and received in due time an important position at court. My father, ever fonder of hunting than of ruling, left more and more of the affairs of state to Mooj; and Mooj, using his powers and opportunities to his own advantage, se-

cretly plotted to steal the throne. One day, when my father failed to return from a hunting trip, Mooj summoned the councillors of state and proclaimed himself sole sovereign of Seebania. When uncle Stephen and I quite naturally protested we were cast into separate dungeons and threatened with utter destruction. I was at this time about twenty-four," continued Realbad reflectively, "and already married to Isomere, this lovely princess I see you all admiring." Isomere blushed becomingly at Realbad's praise, but with scarcely a pause he continued his recital:

"On the second day of my imprisonment Mooj appeared before me and openly acknowledged that he was a powerful magician and that he had destroyed my father and secured by his magic spells the loyalty and support of all the Seebanians. If I promised to go away and never reveal my identity, he promised that no harm should come to Isomere, my wife. If I refused to go, or if, after I did go, I ever tried to return and claim her, his magic would tell him so, and at that very moment Isomere would be utterly and dreadfully destroyed. So what could I do but agree!" Realbad groaned at the memory of that awful day.

"With nothing more than the suit on my back he went on," I started out. Mooj accompanied me to the edge of a deep ravine, and as I turned to have one last look at my father's castle the deceitfulascal suddenly pushed me over the edge." Ojo looked up with a horrified gasp into Realbad's face. "Fortunately," went on Realbad, giving Ojo a reassuring smile, "Mooj did not know of the magic rings given me by an old fairy at my christening. These rings I wore always, and they kept me from being crushed or injured. Well, as I lay stunned and too miserable to rise at the bottom of the cliff, a band of robbers happened along. Taking pity on me and I must have presented a woeful enough appearance - they picked me up and carried me off to their cave. There I gradually pulled myself together. Robbed of everything I held most dear I grew bitter and disillusioned, becoming first a member and later the leader of the robber band. And an outlaw I have been ever since," declared Realbad defiantly, "until chance threw me into the company of Ojo, my own but unknown son, and this honest bear. The rest you know," he finished seriously.

"The rest, I will tell you," announced Unc Nunkie, rising grandly in his place, and for the first time in Dorothy's memory speaking fluently and rapidly.

"After Ree Alla Bad's banishment and while I was still imprisoned, a son was born to the queen. Word of it was brought to me by one of the guards and I was greatly distressed Knowing that Mooj would destroy this boy as he had already destroyed his father and his grandfather, I bribed the guard with my gold watch and managed to escape. Going at night to Isomere's apartment, I begged her to give me her infant son. This she readily agreed to do and would have come herself, had it been possible. But the queen was closely watched. So, fearing to rouse the guards and imperil us all, she gave me the boy, and bravely stayed behind. Resolved never to reveal my identity nor his, I made my way out of Seebania, traveling on and on until I came to the center of an impenetrable forest. Here I found a little house, and here I brought up Ojo in comfort and safety. When it was no longer safe or comfortable, I took him to the Emerald City of Oz."

"No wonder you never talked," sympathized Dorothy, with an admiring glance. "No wonder you became known as 'the silent one."

"Worth it." Lapsing into his old habit of brevity, Unc Nunkie smiled proudly over at Ojo. Then, worn out by his long, unaccustomed conversation, he sat

hurriedly down again.

"If I only had known," grieved Ozma, leaning forward with a sorrowful expression. "You could all have been together long ago."

"Adversity brought us friends and taught us courage," announced Unc Nunkie unexpectedly.

"Why, so it has, so it has," cried the little fairy', cheering up at once. "You are all brave and courageous and I'm proud of you."

"And how about us?" demanded Scraps, bounding indignantly to her feet. "Aren't we brave? Aren't we to have any credit at all? Didn't we try to save Ojo and become clocks into the bargain? Speak up, you cowardly old thing, and tell them how brave we are."

"Oh, let Dorothy tell it," begged the lion bashfully. "I'm still ticking all over." So now Dorothy, urged from all sides, told how she and the Cowardly Lion and Scraps landed in the blue forest, were carried off by the rolling road and came at last to Dicksy Land, and how Reachard had guided them to Moojer Mountain. Then Ojo, with many shy glances at the beautiful queen who was his mother, described all his adventures with the gypsies, with Snufferbux and Realbad up to the time they all met in the wicked magician's hut. It was hard to decide which of the

new countries visited and new characters encountered were strangest and most interesting. The Wizard felt that Reachard was far and away the most singular, Ozma could not keep her eyes off Roganda and Unc Nunkie thought Dicksy Land the queerest of all.

Talking, rejoicing and exclaiming over this and that, no one felt the least bit sleepy, though it was long after one o'clock. Indeed, Ozma still had many problems to solve and dispose of before they retired. Mooj was too powerful and dangerous a wizard to leave at large or even as small as a sparrow, so he was transformed by the magic belt into one drop of water in the Nonestic Ocean, where surely he will do no harm. The old members of Realbad's band were located by Ozma on a distant mountain plateau, changed into simple Winkie farmers and transported to a quiet valley near the Winkie River. The gypsies she banished from Oz altogether, sending them by her magic to wander through the countries of Southern Europe. But all of Ozma's powers or the Wizard's failed to reveal the whereabouts or fate of Realbad's father, so, rising regally, the little sovereign proclaimed Ree Alla Bad and Isomere King and Queen of Seebania. The courtiers, servants,

citizens and all the inhabitants of the forest kingdom, released from the mischievous spells of Mooj, would waken in the morning to find the rightful and hereditary rulers on the throne of Seebania. Then and then only did the little fairy ruler decide to retire and accept the hospitality of Shamsbad for the night.

CHAPTER 21

Back to the Bandits' Cave

ROGANDA, wakening first, rose noiselessly to her feet and stepping to the jeweled window pane looked out to see what kind of day it was going to be. The sun was shining softly on the sloping lawns and beautiful gardens of the castle and everything appeared so lovely that the unicorn could not restrain a neigh of pleasure.

"I have been invited to the capital as a guest of Ozma of Oz," whinnied Roganda self-consciously, as Snuffer, roused by her shrill neigh, lumbered over to the window. "Why not come too, big fellow?" she invited generously. "Ojo is safe and happy and there are many wonderful sights in the Emerald City of Oz."

"There are many wonderful sights here," yawned Snuffer, giving himself a shake. "At first I thought I would return to my own country, but now I've decided to stay with Ojo always and take care of him-that is, if he still wants me."

"Want you! Why, Snuffer, we're friends!" Coming unexpectedly up in back of him Ojo flung both arms around the burly bear. "I hoped you'd stay," he confided happily. "Oh, Snufferbux, we'll have such times together, hunting and fishing and exploring the forest! And what do you think?"

"What?" roared Snuffer, ready to explode with pride and satisfaction.

"Why, Realbad has promised to spend two months of every year in the robbers' cave and we're going to have a big celebration there to-day!"

"And does that please your Royal Highness?" sniffed the bear, giving Ojo a playful poke. "You won't be hungry, you know, for we've eaten those silver apples."

"I believe I could eat a little venison, though," mused Ojo, closing his eyes reminiscently. "Oh, Snufficus, hasn't everything turned out prime?"

"Splendid for you but not so well for us." Joining the little group at the window, the Cowardly Lion

blinked sorrowfully up at the boy.

"I'll miss you, Ojo," gulped the lion tearfully.

"We'll all miss you." Overcome by his feelings, the good beast sat down and wept unrestrainedly, mopping his eyes with the tassel on his tail.

"Oh, please don't cry," begged Ojo, throwing his arm around the lion's neck. "I'll come often to see you, honestly I will!"

"But it won't be the same!" roared the lion, stifling his sobs with great difficulty. "It won't be the same!"

"Nothing is ever the same," neighed the unicorn, switching her tail in a brisk and superior circle.

"That is what makes life interesting." And sounding three musical notes on her horn, Roganda sprang lightly through the window to sample the dew on the rose leaves and nibble delicately at the lilacs. And Roganda is right, my dears. Nothing is ever the same one day as it is the next, but every day is interesting.

Knowing all these gay Oz folk as you now do, you can well imagine the scene in the old robbers' cave in the blue forest. Transported there by Ozma's magic belt, Ojo, Unc Nunkie, Scraps and Snuffer, Realbad and Isomere, Ozma and Dorothy, the Wizard and Roganda, made merry till long shadows fell over

the spruce trees and fires and candles had to be light-
ed. Sitting around the leaping flames, with Snuffer
playing on the old accordion and Realbad singing
old bandit ditties, they spent the happiest evening of
Qjo's life. Even Unc Nunkie found his voice and
joined lustily in the last chorus. Regretfully Ozma
rose at last and said good-bye to her new found
friends and subjects.

Then, before anyone could feel sorry at the neces-
sary parting, the little fairy touched her belt and
transported the Wizard, Dorothy, Scraps, the Cow-
ardly Lion, Roganda and herself to the Emerald
City. Unc Nunkie had decided to remain behind and
act as Realbad's chief adviser. Before she left, Ozma
had given Unc Nunkie a box of wishing pills to take
them back to Shamsbad, but they were not used until
morning, for Realbad-though I suppose I must now
say Ree Alla Bad-and his family were so content
in the old cave that they decided to spend the night
there.

And there, on the soft rug by the fire, Ojo lay as
he had lain before, curled up in the arms of Snuffer-
bux. Falling asleep at last, he dreamed of his new
father and mother, of the stately castle of Shamsbad
and the wonderful times he would have in the for-

ests of Seebania.

Snuffer's dreams were happy, too, for Realbad had promised that the bear should have this very cave to lie dormant in every winter of the year. And in the spring Realbad and Ojo planned to join him for two months and hunt, fish and live the lives of true woodsmen in the blue forest. Of course, I am terribly impressed by Ree Alla Bad the king, but I'm afraid I am going to miss Realbad, the bandit. How about you?

The End