



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Handy Mandy in Oz (Book #31)

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Chapter 1: Mandy Leaves the Mountain

"What-a-BUTTER! What-a-BUTTER!" High and clear above the peaks of Mt. Mern floated the voice of the Goat Girl calling the finest, fattest but most troublesome of her flock. All the other goats were winding obediently down toward the village that perched precariously on the edge of the mountain. But of What-a-butter there was not a single sign nor whisker.

"Serves me right for spoiling the contrary creature," panted Mandy, pushing back her thick yellow braids with her second best hand. "Always wants her own way, that goat—so she does. What-a-butter, I say WHAT-A-BUTTER—come down here this instant." But only the tantalizing tinkle of the goat's silver bell came to answer her, for What-a-butter was climbing up, not down, and there was nothing for Mandy to do but go after her.



Muttering dire threats which she was much too soft hearted ever to carry out, the rosy cheeked mountain lass scrambled over crags and stones, pulling herself up steep precipices, the goat always managing to keep a few jumps ahead, till soon they were almost at the top of the mountain!

Here, stopping on a jutting rock to catch her breath and remove the burrs from her stockings, Mandy heard a dreadful roar and felt an ominous rumbling beneath her feet. What-a-butter on a narrow ledge just above heard it too, and cocked her head anxiously on one side. Perhaps she had best jump down to Mandy. After all, the great silly girl did feed and pet her, and from the sound of things a storm was brewing. If there was one thing the goat feared more than another, it was a thunder-storm, so, rolling her eyes as innocently as if she had not dragged Mandy all over the mountain she stretched her nose down toward her weary mistress.

"Bah—ah-ah-ahhhhhhhhh!" bleated What-a-butter affectionately.

"Oh 'Bah' yourself!" fumed Mandy, making an angry snatch for the Nanny Goat's beard. "Pets and children are all alike—never appreciate a body till they have a stomach ache, or a thunder-storm is coming. Now then, m'lass, be quick with you!"

Holding out her strong arms, Mandy made ready to catch the goat as it jumped off the ledge. But before What-a-butter could stir, there was a perfectly awful crash and explosion and up shot the slab of rock on which Mandy was standing, up—UP and out of sight entirely. Where the mountain girl had been, a crystal column of water spurted viciously into the air, so high the bulging eyes of the goat could see no end to it. Rearing up on her hind legs, What-a-butter turned round and round in a frantic effort to catch a glimpse of her vanishing Mistress. Then thinking suddenly what would happen should the torrent turn and fall upon her, the goat sprang off the ledge and ran madly down the mountain, bleating like a whole herd of Banshees.

And Mandy, as you can well believe, was as frightened as What-a-butter and with twice as much reason. The first upheaval, as the rock left the earth, flung her flat on her nose. Grasping the edges of the slab with all hands, Mandy hung on for dear life and as a stinging shower of icy water sprayed her from head to foot, wondered what under the earth was happening to her. Thorns and thistles! Could the thunder-storm really have come UP instead of down? Certainly it was raining up, and what ever was carrying her aloft with such terrible force and relentlessness?



How could the Goat Girl know that a turbulent spring pent up for thousands of years in the center of Mt. Mern had suddenly burst its way to freedom! And you have no idea of the tremendous power in a mountain spring once it uncoils and lets itself go. Mandy's rock might just as well have been shot into the air by a magic cannon. First it tore upward as if it meant to knock a hole in the sky, then, still travelling at incalculable speed, began to arch and take a horizontal course over the mountains, hills and valleys west of Mern. All poor Mandy knew was that she was hurtling through space at break-neck speed with nothing to save or stop her. The long yellow braids of the Goat Girl streamed out like pennants, while her striped skirt and voluminous petticoats snapped and fluttered like banners in the wind.

"What-a-butter! Oh What-a-butter!" moaned Mandy, gazing wildly over the edge of the rock. But pshaw, what was the use of calling? What-a-butter, even if she heard, could not fly after her through the air, and when she herself came down not even her own goat would recognize her. At this depressing thought, Mandy dropped her head on her arms and began to weep bitterly, for she was quite sure she would never see her friends—her home—or her goats again.

But the rough and frugal life on Mt. Mern had made the Goat Girl both brave and resourceful, so she soon dried her tears and as the rock still showed no signs of slowing up nor dashing down, she began to take heart and even a desperate sort of interest in her experience. Slowly and cautiously she pulled herself to a sitting position and still clutching the edges of the rock, dared to look down at the countries and towns flashing away below.



"After all," sniffed the reckless maiden, "nothing very dreadful has happened yet. I've always wanted to travel and now I AM travelling. Not many people have flown through the air on a rock—why it's really a rocket!" decided Mandy, with a nervous giggle. "And that, I suppose, makes me the first rocket rider in the country, and the LAST, too," she finished soberly as she measured with her eye the distance she would plunge when her rock started earthward. "Now if we'd just come down in that blue lake, below, I might have a chance. Perhaps I should jump?"

But by the time Mandy made up her mind to jump the lake was far behind and nothing but a great desert of smoking sand stretched beneath her.

Chapter 2: The End of the Ride

The sky, from the rosy pink of late afternoon, had faded to a depressing grey, and Mandy could not help thinking longingly of the appetizing little supper she had set out for herself before going up to call the goats. Who would eat it now or even know she was flying through the air like a comet? No one, she concluded drearily, for Mandy was an orphan and lived all by herself in a small cottage on Mt. Mern, high above the village of Fistikins. In a day or two, some of her friends in the village might search the cottage and find her gone, but NOW, now there was nothing to do but sit tight and hope for the best.

Mandy's next glance down was more encouraging. Instead of the dangerous looking desert, she was sailing over misty blue hills and valleys dotted with many small towns and villages. High as she was, she could even hear the church bells tolling the hour, and this made Mandy feel more lost and lonely than ever. All these people below were safely at home and about to eat their suppers while she was flying high and far from everything she knew and loved best.

Hungrily the Goat Girl cast her eyes over the rock she was riding, thinking to find



a small sprig of mountain berries or even a blade of grass to nibble. At first glance, the rock seemed bare and barren, then sticking up out of a narrow crevice Mandy spied a tiny blue flower. "Poor little posy, it's as far from home as I am," murmured the Goat Girl, and carefully breaking the stem, she lifted the blue flower to her nose. Its faint fragrance was vaguely comforting and Mandy had just begun to count the petals, when the rock gave a sickening lurch and started to pitch down so fast Mandy's braids snapped like jumping ropes and her skirts bellied out like a parachute in a gale.

"NOW for it," gasped the Goat Girl closing her eyes and clenching her teeth. "OH! My poor little shins!" Mandy's shins were both stout and sturdy, but even so we cannot blame Mandy for pitying them. Stouter shins than hers would have splintered at such a fall. Hardly knowing what she was doing, Mandy began to pull the petals from the blue flower, calling in an agonized voice as she pulled each one the names of her goats and friends. She had just come to Speckle, the smallest member of her flock, when the end came.



Kimmeny Jimmeny! Was this ALL? Opening one eye, the Goat Girl looked fearfully about her. She was sitting on top of a haystack, no, not a haystack, but a heap of soft blue flower petals as soft as down. Opening the other eye she saw the rock, on which she had travelled so far, bump over a golden fence and fall with a satisfied splash into a shimmering lake. But what lay beyond the lake made Mandy forget all her troubles and fairly moan with surprise and pleasure.

"A CASTLE!" exulted the Goat Girl, putting one hand above her heart. "Oh! I've always wanted to see a castle and now I AM." And this castle, let me tell you, was well worth anyone's seeing, a castle of lacy blue marble carved, and decorated with precious stones, in a way to astonish the eyes of a simple mountain lass. From the tallest tower, a silken pennant floated lazily in the evening breeze.

"K-E-R-E-T-A-R-I-A," Mandy spelled out slowly. Sliding off the heap of flower petals she stood for a long delicious moment lost in admiration. Then, giving herself a businesslike shake to be sure she was not broken or bent by her amazing flight and tumble, Mandy turned to examine the rest of her surroundings.

When she looked at the spot on which she had fallen the stack of blue petals had disappeared, but there, twinkling up cheerfully, was the blue flower as much at home as if it had grown there in the first place. Thoroughly puzzled, Mandy picked the little flower a second time and slipped it into the pocket of her apron.



Even without the mystery of the blue flower it was astonishing enough to find herself in the stately park of this gorgeous blue castle. There was a tree lined avenue and velvety lawns splashed with star shaped flower beds stretched in every direction. Only the small patch of land on which she was standing was bare and uncultivated. And evidently someone was at work here, for a great white ox, with golden horns, yoked to a gold plow stood with his back to Mandy, dozing cozily in the pleasant dusk.

At sight of the ox, Mandy gave a little sigh of relief and content. Long ago an old mountain woman had given her this sensible piece of advice. "When you do not know what to do next, do the first useful piece of work that comes to hand." Now here, right at hand, was a useful piece of work, and while she was trying to figure out the whole puzzle of the flying rock and strange blue flower, she might just as well be ploughing. Then when the owner of the castle saw her working so industriously, he might invite her to supper. So, grasping the tail of the ancient plow, Mandy clicked her tongue in a cheerful signal for the ox to start.

The white ox, who had not seen nor heard the Goat Girl till this minute turned his head in a lordly fashion and gave her a long haughty look. Not really believing what he saw, he took another look, and then, with a bellow of fright and outrage went charging across the park pulling the startled Goat Girl behind him. Mandy might have let go, but she just did not think of it, and with pounding heart and flying braids held fast to the pitching plough as it tore through flower beds, ripped up lawns and cut fearful furrows in the pebbled paths. Clouds of earth, stones and whole plants uprooted ruthlessly from their beds showered round her ears, and as they reached the palace, a hard metal object hit her squarely between the eyes. Putting up a hand, Mandy caught the flying missile and mechanically slipped it into her pocket, and the next instant the ox lunging through an open French window dragged her into the magnificently furnished throne room of the castle. Not only into the throne room, mind you, but into the lap of royalty itself!

Chapter 3: The King of Keretaria

The white ox in his mad dash across the throne room had run violently into a marble pillar, hurling Mandy straight into the arms of a very tall, very stern, and very blue looking monarch. Pages and courtiers tripped and fell left and right in a scramble to get out of the way, while the ox, snorting and trembling, looked balefully over his shoulder at the Goat Girl.



"Whu-what is—the—meaning of—this out-rageous in-trusion?" panted the King. "Unhand me, woman! Remove your finger from my eye and your arms—your ARMS! Hi! Hi! Hi!" The King's sentence ended in three frightened squeaks. "Is it a girl or an octopus?" he puffed, heaving up his chest in an endeavor to dislodge Mandy. "Hi! Hi! Hi! Are you going to allow this clumping savage to insult my Majesty in this—er—high-handed manner?"

As the Goat Girl, by this time scarlet from anger and mortification, jumped off the King's lap, three very high officials of the Court of Keretaria darted forward.

"The High Qui-questioner! The Imperial Persuader! And the Lord High Upper Dupper of the Realm!" bawled a page. Having delivered himself of this impressive announcement the page bolted back of a curtain and from there peered with astonished eyes at the visitor. Everyone in the grand blue throne room looked frightened and ready to run at a moment's notice. Wondering what could be the matter with them all, Mandy with many misgivings watched the counselors of Keretaria advance in a threatening row.

"Now then—not a move!" thundered the High Qui-questioner, tapping her sharply on the shoulder with a golden staff shaped like a huge interrogation point. "It is my duty to question all strangers who ride, fall, fly or break into our Kingdom, and you," the Haughty Nobleman gave Mandy a cold blue stare, "YOU are stranger than any stranger who has ever come to Keretaria."

"It is my duty to persuade you to do as his Majesty commands," stated the Imperial Persuader, raising his gold spiked club.

"And it is MY duty to put you in your place," sniffed the Lord High Upper Dupper rattling a bunch of keys that hung from his belt.

"Well if you ask me," puffed the Ox, rolling his eyes wildly round at the Goat Girl, "her place is in a museum and the sooner you lock her upper dupper, the better." Now Mandy was so astonished to hear the Ox actually speaking, she gave a loud cry and flung up her hands, every single seven of them.

"Help! Help!" yelled the Courtiers, scurrying like mice into corners and corridors. Only the white Ox, the King and his Counselors kept their places.

"How DARE you come into a King's presence armed in this barbarous fashion?" gasped the High Qui-questioner, taking a step toward the Goat Girl, but too frightened to touch her.

"PIGS!" cried Mandy, suddenly losing her temper. "Can I help my seven arms? All of us on Mt. Mern have seven arms and hands and you with your skinny two seem far funnier than I. I am Mandy, the Goat Girl, as anyone in his senses can see."



"The girl is right," observed the Ox, gazing more attentively at Mandy and now speaking quite calmly, "she can no more help those seven arms than you can help those seven warts on your nose, Questo. I tell you this maiden is a real curiosity and if you three Hi-boys will cease rattling your teeth and your clubs, perhaps she will explain why she has come to Keretaria. I myself shall call her Handy Mandy."

"Why, the beast has more sense than its masters," thought the Goat Girl in surprise.

"Well," rumbled the King ungraciously, "if you have anything to say before we lock you up, SAY IT, but do not wave your arms about, PLEASE."

Swallowing nervously, clasping four of her hands behind her back and stuffing the other three into convenient pockets in her apron, Mandy began to speak. "I was driving my goats home from the mountain, Your Majesty, when the rock on which I was standing exploded suddenly into the air, flew like a bird over hill, valley, and desert and dropped me into your garden—"

"And not a bruise nor a bump to show for it," grunted the Imperial Persuader elevating his nose to show he was not taken in by such a tale. In spite of his suspicious glance, Mandy decided to say nothing of the blue flower that had so miraculously softened her fall.

"And since when have rocks flown through the air?" inquired the Lord High Upper Dupper sarcastically.

"Ahem—in the garden," continued Mandy undaunted by the two interruptions, "I saw this great white ox and thinking to do a bit of honest work for my supper, grasped the plough, but—"

"That was a little oxident," murmured the great beast in a jovial voice, "for, catching sight of a seven-armed maiden all at once and without warning, I took to my heels and landed her in her present unpleasant predicament. Is that not so, m'lass?"



Looking at the Ox with round eyes, Mandy nodded.

"But she still has not explained all these arms," complained the Imperial Persuader. "Whoever heard of a seven-handed maiden?"

"I have!" asserted Mandy stoutly. "And what, pray, is there to explain? This iron hand—" the Goat Girl raised it slowly and thoughtfully as she spoke, "I use for ironing, lifting hot pots from the stove and all horrid sort of hard work; this leather hand I keep for beating rugs, dusting, sweeping, and so on; this wooden hand I use for churning and digging in the garden; these two red rubber hands for dishwashing and scrubbing, and my two fine white hands I keep for holding and braiding my hair." With all seven hands extended before her, Mandy smiled engagingly up at the King.

"Undoubtedly a witch," whispered the Imperial Persuader darkly, as the King in spite of himself gazed curiously down at his seven-armed visitor.

"A dangerous character, Your Majesty," hissed the High Qui-questioner, shaking his head disapprovingly.

"To the dungeons with her!" rasped the Lord High Upper Dupper, rattling his keys like castanets.

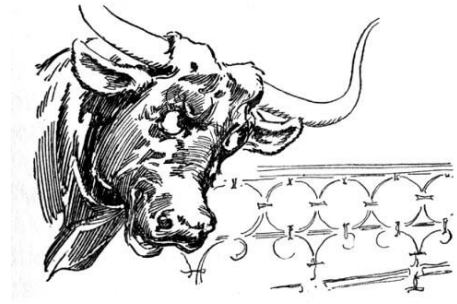
"WHAT?" bawled the white Ox, stamping all of his gold shod feet in rapid succession. "You mean to consign this marvel of skill and efficiency to a dungeon? What a set of dunces you are! Come, Handy, I myself, will take you for a slave. Out of my way, DOLTS!" Swaggering a bit, and with the golden plough still clanking and bumping behind him, the Ox ambled at a dignified pace toward the door. Mandy, though she did not relish the idea of becoming his slave, was greatly relieved at the interest the Ox was taking in her case, but before following him, she looked inquiringly up at the King.



"Yes, GO!" commanded His Majesty harshly, "I hereby give you into the care and service of Nox, the Royal Ox of Keretaria. Harm one hair of his head, and you will pay for it with your life and perish, I promise you, most ignominiously."

"Mercy—ercy," muttered Mandy tiptoeing nervously after her new master, "doesn't the fellow know any short words? How queer everything is on this side of the mountain, people with only two arms, animals talking and giving orders to Kings. Suppose the goats at home started bossing the villagers?" And what would the villagers think of her strange flight and reception in Keretaria? Well, from what she herself had seen of Royalty, decided the Goat Girl, she much preferred her goats or even the company of this haughty white Ox. Stepping briskly beside him, Mandy resolved to humor the creature till she saw a bit more of the country or found some safe way back to her mountain.

Nox swinging along at his own indolent gait paid no further attention to the Goat Girl, but when they reached his royal quarters, which to Mandy looked more like a castle than a stable, he began bawling so fiercely for the stable boys she decided uncomfortably that being his slave might prove both unpleasant and dangerous. However, when six little boys dressed in blue overalls and aprons ran out, the Royal Ox addressed them quite kindly. The first, without waiting for instructions unhitched the plough and lifted the yoke from the royal shoulders.



"Prepare Kerry's quarters for my new slave," directed Nox, turning to the second and third. "You others, bring dinner for two, and mind you fetch Handy Mandy everything they have at the King's table." With a playful lunge Nox started them smartly on their way, then moved grandly into the huge stone stable and along to his own luxurious gold-paved stall.

"My—y!" exclaimed the Goat Girl, sinking breathlessly to a three legged stool, "how grand and elegant you are here! My—y, I wish What-a-butter could see this!"

"One of your goats?" murmured Nox, burying his nose in the huge marble bowl he used for a drinking trough.

Mandy nodded. "I wish she were here now!" she added with a rapturous little sigh.

"Well, I don't." Deliberately the Royal Ox licked the water from his lips. "Do you suppose I'd allow a miserable goat in my sapphire trimmed stall?"

"Miserable!" squealed Mandy, springing off the stool. "What-a-butter's the smartest goat on the mountain; she wouldn't give two bleats and a BAH for an old Hoopadoop like YOU!"

"Hoopadoop!" repeated the Ox in a dazed whisper. "Do you mean to stand there and call the Royal Ox of Keretaria a Hoopadoop?"

"Yes," said Mandy firmly but backing off a bit as she spoke. "What makes you think you're so much better than a goat even if you do talk, put on airs and have golden horns?"

"Well," and to Mandy's surprise and relief, Nox cleared his throat and grinned quite amiably, "after all I AM the Royal Ox, you know, more precious to the King than all his court and subjects. Everyone jumps at my least command, so why shouldn't I put on a few airs? Besides do you think it's polite to call me an old

Hoopadoop when I've just saved you from a dungeon?"

"No," admitted Mandy, resuming her seat thoughtfully, "I don't suppose it is. Maybe you are as good as a goat," she added with a little burst of generosity.

"Oh, thank you! Thank you very much!" Through half closed eyes the Royal Ox looked quizzically at the Goat Girl. "I believe we shall get on famously, m'lass, famously. The truth is, you amuse me no end and so long as you amuse me everything will be smooth as silk. But of course, if you bore me, I will bore you. Oh, positively!" Lowering his head Nox shook his horns playfully.

"Now I shouldn't try that, if I were you," advised Mandy, raising her iron hand and cracking the fingers warningly. "For if you do, I might throw things!"

"Ha ha! I believe you would." The enormous beast, charmed by so much spirit and independence fairly beamed upon his new slave. "I take it you are pretty good at throwing things."



"Yes, and at catching them, too." Reaching up, Mandy took seven of the dozen brushes off the shelf above her head. Tossing them all into the air with three of her hands, she caught them easily with the other four. Then dragging her stool closer, she began brushing the coat of her royal charge so hard and vigorously he blinked with pleasure and astonishment. "Will you have your tail plain, curled or plaited?" asked Mandy in a businesslike voice.

"Er—er—plain, thank you." With admiration and some alarm, Nox regarded the whirling arms of the Goat Girl, but the four little stable boys, appearing at that moment, stared at her in glassy eyed fright and consternation. For Nox they had brought a tray heaped high with corn and oats and another with fresh sliced apples. For Mandy there were two trays of gold dishes containing a sample of everything from the royal table. Dropping her brushes Mandy seized all the trays at once in her various hands, which so frightened the stable boys they took to their heels yelling at the tops of their voices.

Winking at the Royal Ox, Mandy set his supper on the gold stand meant for that purpose, then dropping to the floor before her own two trays began her first dinner in a strange land. And WHAT a strange land, mused Mandy helping herself from the gold dishes with first one hand and then another.

"Well, m'lass?" inquired Nox, daintily nibbling his oats and apples. "Is this not better than bread and water in a dungeon cell?" Too full for utterance, Mandy

rapturously nodded.

Chapter 4: The Message in the Horn

After the Goat Girl had finished her supper and the stable boys had hurried off with the trays, Nox showed his new slave to her quarters. Handy Mandy, who had expected nothing better than a heap of straw in the corner of an empty stall, decided that for a slave, she was faring pretty well. A small but complete apartment had been built in the wing next to Nox's stall, with not only a comfortable bedroom and bath, but a small sitting room as well. The bed was a huge gold four poster with blue silk sheets and comforters. Never in her hard and simple life had Handy dreamed of such elegance!



"Here, try the chairs," urged Nox, trotting almost briskly into the sitting room. This, Mandy was only too willing to do, and the pretty little room with its book shelves, lamps and pictures seemed to the honest Goat Girl much more desirable than the palace.

"All belonged to Kerry," mumbled the Royal Ox, settling himself largely on a white rug beside her.

"Was Kerry one of your slaves?" asked Mandy, rocking herself cheerfully to and fro with all her hands resting quietly in her lap.

"SLAVE!" The Ox spoke sharply. "I should say not. Kerry was a King! Our own little King up to a few years ago, and what a lad he was—what a lad!"

"Was?" exclaimed Mandy. "Why—what happened to him?"

"He disappeared," Nox told her sadly. "Nobody knows how—or where, just disappeared, my girl, on a hunting trip, and this blue nosed scoundrel who claims to be his uncle, came to rule over Keretaria. Since then," Nox lowered his voice cautiously, "everything is different—and changed. The people are treated no better than dogs. DOGS!" repeated the Royal Ox bitterly. "Of course this fellow cannot interfere with me nor take any chances for there is a prophecy on the west wall of the castle that has stood for a thousand years."

"What does it say?" asked Mandy, leaning forward and clasping the arms of the rocker with all hands.

Impressively Nox repeated the prophecy: "So long as the Royal Ox of Keretaria is in good health and spirits, so long and no longer shall the present King rule over the Land."

"But who wrote it?" Mandy's rocker stopped with a surprised squeak.



"Nobody knows," answered Nox soberly, "but it has come true dozens and dozens of times. Each time a new King is crowned in Keretaria a new Ox appears mysteriously at the Royal coronation. If anything happens to the Royal Ox the King also is destroyed!"

"My—y!" The Goat Girl now rocked very fast indeed. "So that's the reason they take such good care of you, old Toggins. But tell me, where do all of you Royal Oxen come from in the first place? And how is it you can speak? None of the beasts on Mount Mern can say a word."

"Oh, that—" the Royal Ox lifted his head lazily. "Keretaria is in the wonderful Land of Oz, my dear Handy, and all Oz creatures can talk, even the mice and squirrels. But what part of Oz we white oxen really come from, I myself cannot rightly say. I seem to remember a great blue forest and many happy days there. Then one evening a silver cloth was thrown over my head and I fell into a deep and immediate slumber. When I awakened, I was here in Keretaria and on that same day little King Kerry was crowned King of the Realm. From the attendants and courtiers I soon learned of the strange prophecy, but the young boy King was so devoted to me—and I to him, I did not miss the forest or my former freedom.

"To be near me, Kerry had this apartment built in the stable and spent more than half of his time in my company. My life being easy and pleasant, I gave little thought to the past or to the future, but spent all my energies enjoying the present. Once in a while just for the looks of the thing, I appeared in Royal Processions, and each day at sundown I was yoked for an hour to the golden plough and required to stand for an hour in the royal garden. But I never did any real work or ploughing, till you, my reckless Handy, came along today."

"But what about the little King?" begged the Goat Girl, as Nox lapsed into a thoughtful silence and seemed to have forgotten all about her.

"He disappeared, just as I told you." The Royal Ox rolled his big eyes mournfully upward. "On this day, as on many others, I carried him on my back to the edge

of the wood. There, mounting his favorite steed, he rode away with the Royal Huntsmen for an hour's sport. As I was returning to the castle someone struck me a terrific blow that felled me to the earth, where I lay for several hours in complete unconsciousness. Whoever struck me down evidently thought I was finished, for when I finally did regain my senses, I was buried beneath a heap of loose earth and leaves. Still dazed and hardly knowing what I was about, I struggled out and staggered back to the courtyard. One of my horns had been bent during the encounter and my expression was so wild and distracted no one recognized me as BOZ, the Royal Ox of Little King Kerry. The whole castle was in an uproar, for a new King had taken possession of the throne and thinking, of course, I was the next and new Royal Ox, this rascally imposter named me NOX. The Keretarians, without daring to inquire what had become of their former ruler, crowned me with daisies and laurel and hurried to do the bidding of their new ruler."

"WHY—the big cowards!" said Handy Mandy, clenching all of her fists, "And do you mean to tell me nothing has been heard of the little King since then?"

"Nothing." The Royal Ox moved his head drearily from side to side. "The people think the Royal Prophecy has been fulfilled again and what can they DO? A farmer's boy brought word that Boz, the Royal Ox, had been struck down and spirited away, so naturally they felt sure that Kerry also had been destroyed or taken prisoner."



"Then no one suspects you are really Boz and not NOX?" questioned the Goat Girl, now on the very edge of her chair. "Oh, my—y, but don't you see, if you are still the same Ox who came to Keretaria with King Kerry and you are still all right, he must be all right, too. That is, if the prophecy means anything."

"Sh—hh!" warned Nox, looking about nervously. "Someone might hear you. That is what keeps me here," he went on seriously. "I felt if I stayed quietly in my place, Kerry would some day return, claim his own throne and drive this miserable tyrant out of the country."

"Stay quietly here when the little fellow may be needing you!" cried Handy aghast. "Oh, why don't you go look for him, you great big OX you! Come on, what are we waiting for? Why I'll drag that old rascal off the throne with my own hands," promised the Goat Girl indignantly waving her arms.

"Wait! Stop!" Nox sprang up with surprising lightness for one usually so ponderous and slow. "Do you realize that I am treasured and watched more

closely than the crown jewels? At this very moment twenty guardsmen stalk round and round the stable. I have as much chance of leaving Keretaria as a goldfish has of flying through a forest."

As if to prove his words a tall soldier in a blue shako thrust his head suddenly through the window from the outside. "Is everything in order and as you wish, your Highness?" puffed the Guard, looking suspiciously at the Goat Girl's revolving arms.

"Everything is lovely," murmured the Ox in a sleepy voice. "My slave here is doing her exercises and when she finishes she will polish my horns." At his warning wink, Handy Mandy dropped all her arms at her side.

"Well! Well! A pleasant evening to you," mumbled the soldier, withdrawing his head after another disapproving look at the Goat Girl. For a moment after he had disappeared neither spoke, then Handy Mandy, snatching a silk cover from one of the pillows fell to polishing Nox's left horn for very dear life.

"I can always think faster when I'm working," she observed earnestly.

"Think away," replied the Ox, closing his eyes so as not to see the numerous hands flashing past his nose. "But be careful what you say and do. If you rouse the suspicions of old King Kerr, you'll be flung into a dungeon in spite of all my influence."



"Now don't you be worrying about me," chortled Handy with a little wink and nod. "I've been taking care of myself and a flock of goats for ten years! Say, this is a bend, for sure." The Goat Girl ran her rubber fingers curiously along the curve in the Ox's left horn and then, with one of her sudden and kind-hearted impulses, tried to straighten the quirk with a quick twist of her wrist. Imagine, then, if you can, her horror and surprise when the golden horn came off in her hand.

"Oh my goats and my goodness!" shuddered Handy hopping from one foot to the other. "What'll I do? Where's some glue? Oh My—igh—igh! I'm mighty sorry!"

"Sorry!" gulped the Royal Ox, glaring at the Goat Girl with rolling eyes and lashing tail. But before he could lunge forward as he certainly intended to do, Handy gave a little scream of excitement. "Oh look," she panted, pointing all thirty-five fingers at the base of Nox's horn, "Oh, my dear—ear, it screws on—there are regular grooves. Wait—I'll have it back in a jiffy."

Nox, who couldn't possibly see the top of his own head, merely gave a grunt, but Handy Mandy, lifting the horn in her wooden hand, screamed again and then

began to shake the horn violently. At her second shake, two silver balls tumbled out and rolled away into a corner. Scrambling after them, with Nox now as interested as she, the Goat Girl recovered them both and dropped breathlessly on a sofa.

On closer examination Handy discovered the balls would open as easily as cardboard Easter eggs, and with Nox's head resting heavily on her shoulder she gave the first a quick turn. It came apart at once and in the hollow center lay a small folded paper. Spreading it out on her knees, Handy read in a hoarse whisper: "Go to the Silver Mountain of OZ."



"Silver Mountain? Do you know where that is?" exclaimed the Goat Girl, looking wildly round at Nox.

"No, but I'll wager my head it has something to do with Kerry! Quick, m'lass, open the other ball."

With the trembling fingers of her good white hand the Goat Girl obeyed. Inside the second sphere lay a small silver key. After they had examined this and read the message all over again, Handy carefully tucked the two articles back in the silver balls and returned the balls to the golden horn. Then, hastily screwing the horn back on its base, the two began whispering earnestly together.



"Mean to say you never knew your horn came off?" questioned Handy, clasping and unclasping her hands. "Mean to say you never heard of this Silver Mountain?"

"No to both questions," answered the Ox with an anxious little sigh. "But now that we do know, we must start off at once to search for it and see for ourselves whether Kerry is imprisoned there by his enemies. Though how we'll escape these guards or ever get away with half the Kingdom watching, I cannot imagine!"

"Never fear, we'll manage," promised Handy easily. "Why with your horns and my hands it will take an army to stop us. Now get your rest, Ox dear, and in the morn's morning we'll be journeying."

"You're right," breathed the Ox, starting obediently toward his stall. "I more than

half believe you."

"Good night, then," called the Goat Girl softly. "Don't talk in your sleep and give our plans away."

Chapter 5: Out of Keretaria!

Nox was asleep on a heap of white flower petals in the corner of his stall, asleep and dreaming of the Silver Mountain of Oz, when a sharp tap on the shoulder rudely awakened him.

"Come!" whispered an urgent voice. "Time to start! Come, I've managed everything." Lurching to his feet and still in a daze, the Royal Ox looked askance and with no great favor at the Goat Girl.

"Why, it's not even light!" he moaned feebly.



"Of course not," admitted Handy Mandy guardedly, "but I poked my nose out the door a moment ago and saw all the guards were a bit drowsyish, so I tapped them on the head with this." Handy Mandy raised her iron hand and with a little grimace beckoned for Nox to hurry. "Come along now, and we can be out of here before they know what's what or who."

So Nox, with a regretful look round his comfortable stall and a sigh for his morning bath and breakfast, moved quietly after her. While the Royal Creature had spent most of his time during the past two years thinking of ways to rescue his young Master, now that he was actually starting out he was filled with doubt and dismay. How could they ever find this Silver Mountain and overcome the enemies that most certainly would beset them?

The sight of the twenty guards lying in a stiff row somewhat reassured the downhearted beast and in the dim light of early morning he looked thoughtfully up at the sturdy mountain lass stepping so resolutely beside him. In each hand Handy carried a different weapon, and resting on her broad shoulders was a rake, an axe, one guard's gun, another guard's sword, a spade and a long handled broom. Noting his astonished glance, the Goat Girl grinned and with her one free hand touched her fingers to her lips. So, silently and without exchanging a word, the two crossed the stable yard, the Royal Park, hurried through a little wood, and came out on a dusty blue Highway.



"NOW!" said Handy, looking up and down the road to make sure no one was coming, "now we can talk and decide which direction to take."

"How can we do that," objected Nox, panting a little from the unaccustomed exertion before breakfast, "when neither of us knows where this Silver Mountain is?"

"Well, we have tongues, haven't we? And can ask, can't we?" Handy Mandy rattled her weapons impatiently. "But before we worry about the Silver Mountain we must get out of Keretaria. Which is the quickest way to the border?"

"Oh, North," answered Nox promptly. "Keretaria is in the upper part of the Munchkin Country of Oz and once we cross the Northern branch of the Munchkin River, we'll be entirely out of the country."

"Fine! Then we'll go North. And what lies beyond the Munchkin River?" inquired the Goat Girl, shifting the axe to her left shoulder.

"I've never crossed myself," admitted Nox, moving along in his slow and dignified manner, "but I have heard there are many mountains and if we go far enough the Purple Land of the Gillikins."

"Sounds interesting," decided Handy Mandy, "and who knows, among all those mountains we may find the one we are looking for! By the way, am I to call you Boz, Nox or Goldie Horns? But I believe I'll call you Nox, for somehow I like Nox the Ox best."

"Anything you say," yawned her companion, switching his tail negligently, "but I shall always call YOU, Handy Mandy. It suits you, m'lass, and you need no longer consider yourself a slave."

"Ho, ho, I never did," roared the Goat Girl, glancing cheerfully down at her lordly companion. "That was just a joke, wasn't it? You know, everything in this Land of Oz is extremely funny and peculiar. Two-armed natives, animals talking, Kings disappearing and mysterious messages and prophecies."



"People always think a new country strange!" observed the Ox philosophically. "To us it seems quite right and natural. But I daresay if I were to find myself on Mt. Mern I'd consider everything there very odd and upsetting; rocks flying through the air, for instance, and landing one soft and light as a daisy in a strange King's garden."

"But all of our rocks don't fly, in fact I never knew one to do such a thing before. And no wonder I landed as soft as a daisy—there was a blue daisy under me or I'd have been splintered to smithereens!"

"Daisy?" Nox licked his lips hungrily. "You never said anything about a daisy."

"Oh, I never tell all I know," confided Handy, "especially to Hi-qui-cockadoodlums like the King and his Counselors. But there was a daisy—growing on the rock and I picked it. As I started to fall I began pulling off the petals, and when I landed I came down on a high, huge pile of them, a heap as high as a haystack," continued Handy Mandy dreamily. "So I slid off the stack and turned to look at the castle, and when I looked again, the petals were gone, but there was the daisy itself growing up as pert as you please in this strange garden. So what did I do but pick it again and here it is!" Triumphantlly Handy pulled the blue flower from her pocket.

"My, what a dear little daisy!" murmured the Ox. "How delicious it would taste."

"No! NO!" cried Handy, as Nox rolled his long tongue out toward the flower. "It's too pretty to eat."

"Nothing's too pretty to eat," replied the Ox plaintively. "Funny it hasn't wilted, though."

"Well, I believe it's magic," stated the Goat Girl, with a positive little shake of her head. As she returned the daisy to her pocket, Handy felt the hard metal object that had hit her in the forehead when she and Nox ploughed through the King's garden.

"Look! What do you suppose this is?" she queried, tapping the Ox sharply on the shoulder, for he was walking sleepily along with his eyes closed. "This is what we dug up when we rushed through the garden, you know."

"How should I know?" grunted the Ox indifferently, opening one eye. "Just a silver hammer, isn't it? Maybe we can trade it for a good breakfast when we cross the river."

"My—y—how you talk!" scolded Handy. "We're not going to trade it at all. See, there's an initial on it. A big W. Now what would W stand for?"

"Who, what, which, where, oh why worry?" mumbled the Ox, plodding resignedly along beside her.

"Well, anyway, it will make a splendid potato masher," concluded the Goat Girl, returning the hammer to her pocket.

"Yes, if we had any potatoes." The Ox sighed heavily as he spoke, looking off into the distance with such a mournful eye Handy Mandy laughed a little all to herself.

"Oh cheer up," sniffed the Goat Girl, "you're not starved yet. And hurry up, too, the sun's going higher every moment and we'd better pass those farms before the people waken."



It was against Nox's nature to hurry, but realizing the wisdom of the Goat Girl's advice, he broke into an awkward gallop. In spite of his great weight, the Royal creature was light as a daisy on his feet, and except for the faint rattle of Handy's weapons they made little noise as they ran past the dome-shaped blue houses and barns of the Munchkin farmers.

"Couldn't we stop for a few greens?" puffed Nox, looking longingly over the fence at a field of cabbages.

"Not here, dear—ear!" Red faced and breathless, the Goat Girl ran on. "Wait till we cross this river—iver."



"But I'm not used to this—sort—of—thing," complained Nox peevishly. "Running races before breakfast on an empty stomach. No bath—no brush—no rub down!"

"Well, here's your brush," gasped Handy, picking her way through a dense

thicket as the highway ended in a small wood, "and yonder's your bath, Mister. My—y, what a blue river!"

"Everything's blue in the Munchkin Country of Oz," Nox told her sulkily, as sharp briars and thorns reached out to scratch his satiny hide.

"Even the Royal Ox of Keretaria," hinted Handy with a sly wink. "Oh the river's blue and the houses are blue and even the wind blew—Hoo Hoo! Come on."

"Don't try to be funny," with heaving sides, the Ox stopped on the edge of the gleaming blue stream. "Don't try to be funny, I beg."

"Oh, I don't have to try, I am!" laughed Handy, flinging the axe, the rake, the spade, the sword, the gun and the broomstick across the river.

"Wait!" snorted the Ox, as Handy, having got rid of her load, raised all of her hands above her head and prepared to dive in. "Wait, can you swim?"

"I don't know, but I'll soon find out," cried Handy, and before Nox could prevent it, the Goat Girl leapt off the bank and disappeared beneath the blue waters of the Munchkin River. For once, Nox forgot his dignity and Royal station and plunged frantically after his reckless companion. Swimming around with his head under water, he finally located Handy Mandy and gripping her yellow plaits firmly in his teeth, dragged her to the opposite bank. The Goat Girl was so full of water, she had little to say and lay soggily on the grass while Nox looked down at her with mingled admiration and concern.

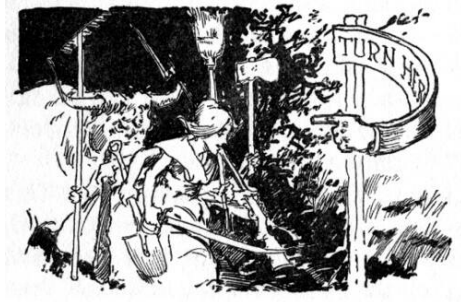
"Never do such a thing again," he wheezed severely as Handy finally sat up and began wringing the water from her voluminous skirts. "Swimming is an art and must be learned and practiced. But for oat's sake, why didn't you flap all those arms when you hit the water?" he finished irritably.

"Oh, is that what you're supposed to do? This way?" Before Nox could step a step, the Goat Girl had jumped into the river again. This time instead of going down she splashed and whirled her seven arms so fast and furiously she just managed to keep her head above water. But Nox, now thoroughly annoyed and without giving her a chance to get far from shore, waded in and determinedly dragged her back to dry land.

"What in skyblue onions are you trying to do?" he sputtered angrily, "Drown yourself?"

"No, I'm trying to swim," coughed the Goat Girl, struggling to get away from the angry Ox. "Do you suppose I'm going to let this Munchkin River get the best of me?"

"Yes, and while you are swimming or rather practicing your swimming some of these Keretarians will come and capture us," gurgled Nox. "Are we escaping or are we swimming—quick now, make up your mind."



Nox's earnest words brought Handy quickly to her senses and as the Royal Ox let go her skirts, she snatched up her weapons and without waiting to wring out her clothes started briskly across the meadows.

"Never mind, you'll be a fine swimmer some day," said Nox, trotting more amiably beside her. The cool river water had refreshed the Royal creature and Handy Mandy's determination and courage made him a little ashamed of his own complaints. "Takes a little practice, that's all."

"Practice!" repeated Handy, dripping water from every plait and pore. "Well just wait till we come to the next river, I'll show you! But LOOK, here are more blue houses, so we must still be in the Munchkin Country."

"Yes, but we're out of Keretaria," Nox reminded her cheerfully. "What's that signpost say, my girl?"

Hurrying forward, Handy squinted up at the rough board nailed to a blue spruce and then began to clench and unclench her one free fist.

"TURN HERE!"

directed the sign. "Turn here and go straight back where you came from."

"Well, I'll be buttered!" cried the Goat Girl, throwing down every one of her weapons. "I'll be churned and buttered."

"But what had we butter do?" muttered the Royal Ox, so taken aback by the saucy message that even his tongue was twisted.

"Why, we'll go straight on, of course," declared Handy Mandy, tossing her yellow plaits defiantly. "Who are whoever they are to tell us our business?" And recovering her weapons one by one, the Goat Girl tramped down the crooked lane directly ahead of them, the Royal Ox with lifted nose and horns, stepping warily behind her.

Chapter 6: Turn Town!

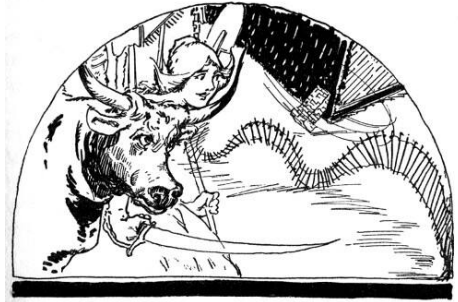
Determined as she was, Handy found it impossible to go straight on, for the lane curved and twisted this way and that, ending finally in a perfect corkscrew turn. The trees on both sides were now so dense Handy and the Royal Ox could not have left the road even had they wished to do so.

"We're going round and round and getting nowhere," said Nox in an abused voice. "Of all the roads in Oz why did we have to pick this one?"

"Because it dared us, I suppose. Hi—Yi!" exclaimed Handy, leaning against a tree to rest. "I'm dizzy as a bat and hungry as a goat."

"Too bad you're not a goat," murmured Nox, who had stopped to nibble the lower branches of a maple. "These leaves are quite tender."

"Well, I may come to them," sighed Handy, looking at him enviously. "But shall we go on? I think one more turn will bring us out of here."



Handy was right for one more round brought them to the end of corkscrew lane, but only to find themselves facing a high, forbidding wall. There was a gate and turnstile in the wall, and beyond the Goat Girl caught a glimpse of a confused whirling village where everything seemed to be turning round or over. "It's just because I'm so dizzy," thought Handy, clutching her head with her one free hand. But Nox, peering over her shoulder gave a loud and indignant bellow as a house on the corner of the street nearest them turned completely over and began spinning merrily on its chimney, while the fence running round the bakery shop next door started really to run around, kicking up its posts with great glee and abandon.

"Hu—what kind of silly place is this?" rumbled the Ox backing hastily away. But Handy Mandy had seen a whole row of little pies in the bakeshop window and motioning vigorously for Nox to follow, stepped over the stile and through the movable gate. It was too much of a squeeze for Nox, but determined not to be left behind, he jumped neatly over. A revolving sign on one of the large public buildings caught their attention at once, but as the building was going one way and the sign another, it was several minutes before they could discover what it said.



"TURN TOWN!" read the Goat Girl in some surprise. "So that's where we are! And would you loo—ook, every house on every street is going round or over. Mercy—ercy on us and where do you suppose the people are?"

"Turning over and over in their beds I take it, it is still quite early, you know," whispered the Royal Ox, speaking cautiously out of the corner of his mouth. "But come on, the streets are not turning, and perhaps if we hurry we can go through before they waken and turn on us. Hurry—hurry—what are you waiting for?"

"Food," sighed Handy wistfully. "I thought I might catch us a few pies, Old Toggins. Here, watch my stuff and I'll bring us each some."

Nox looked sharply up and down the street as the Goat Girl set down her axe, rake, spade, gun, broom and sword, and started off toward the bakery.

Not only the fence but the shop itself was turning now. Handy quite cleverly waited till the gate came opposite her and dashed through, but the open door of the shop kept going by so rapidly she was knocked down several times before she finally darted inside. As she disappeared Nox gave an uneasy snort, but cheered up as the shop window came past and he saw Handy with a pie in every hand, smile at him reassuringly. But alas, the whirling floor of the shop was too much for the Goat Girl and as she started out there was a clatter of broken china and falling furniture.

"Great Gazoo, what's she done now?" moaned Nox as Handy leaped through the door and fell sprawling in the little garden. She still had six of the pies clutched in her various hands, but as she jumped up and raced through the garden gate, windows all up and down the street were flung open. From the right side up ones and the down side down ones kinky black heads came popping out by the hundred.

"Turn out! Turn out! Topsies turn out!" yelled the excited citizens, their voices going higher and higher. "Thieves, robbers, tramps and Stand-Stillians!"

"Here," gasped the Goat Girl reaching Nox in one bound. "Eat these quick and destroy the evidence." Stuffing one of the tarts into her own mouth, Handy made a wry face. "Ugh, TURNIPS!" choked the Goat Girl, dropping the other five in huge disgust. "Whoever heard of turnip turnovers?"

"I'll eat them," offered Nox, lapping up the little pies in his stride, "but run—hurry, here come the natives!" But before Handy could snatch up her weapons, the Topsies, hurling out of windows and doors, came whirling down upon them.



Startled though she was, the Goat Girl could not disguise her interest and

curiosity. With one arm round Nox's neck and the other six stretched stiffly before her to keep back the screeching crowd, she stared with round and fascinated eyes. And, no wonder! The Topsies were about as tall as children, but where their feet should have been, they had sharp horny pegs. Another peg of the same description sprung from each kinky head. With their plump hands the small black and blue men and women spun themselves along by cords attached to their round little middles and they kept reversing themselves, spinning first on one end and then another in a manner very upsetting and confusing to their visitors. The hum made by the Topsies' spinning and their loud raucous cries filled the early morning air, and as Handy tried to push her way through the crowd, several butted her with their sharp pegs.

"Ouch! Stop that!" bellowed Nox, who had been butted too. "Keep still, m'lass, and sooner or later these little pests will run down."

"Turn them out! Turn them in! Turn them round! Turn them over!" shrieked the Topsies hysterically. In the midst of the dreadful confusion, a Topsy taller than all the rest came zooming down the middle of the street.

"Look! STAND-STILLIANS!" shouted a round little spinster waving both arms. "Travelers with legs instead of pegs. Robbers! Thieves! And tramps, your Topjesty."

"Yes, and they have broken into my shop and stolen all my turnip turnovers," screamed the Topsy Baker, spinning round in indignant circles. "Aha, you wait, here comes Tip-Topper. Now you'll catch it you, you Turnover snatchers, you!"

"Now you'll catch it!" shrilled all the rest of the Topsies, spinning faster and faster till Handy and Nox were dizzy just from looking at them.

Except for his size and a flag fluttering from the peg on his head, Tip-Topper looked just like his subjects.

"Spin! Spin!" he whistled angrily. "What do you mean standing still in the middle of Turn Town? Don't you realize you are breaking every one of our rotary laws? Why are you here—did you come to do us a good turn or a bad?"

"Turn 'em down! Turn 'em out! Turn 'em over! Turn 'em round!" insisted the townsmen shrilly.

Between the revolving houses and the spinning Topsies, Handy Mandy scarcely knew which foot she was standing on. As for Nox, he gave a great groan and closing his eyes, left everything to his companion. Handy put two hands over her ears and raising all the others, addressed Tip-Topper in a firm and reasonable manner.

"Tell your people to stand back," directed the Goat Girl calmly. "All we wish is to

pass quietly through your city and never return. NEVER!" she repeated emphatically. It was hard to speak to a person who kept going round and round, but at every third turn Handy managed to catch Tip-Topper's eye and at last he seemed to catch her idea.

"Very well, then, GO!" he commanded haughtily. "And at once!" But when Handy, without stopping to pick up her weapons, started forward, perfect shrieks of anger rose on all sides.

"Not that way! Not that way. Turn! Turn! Turn!" yelled the Topsies. And getting back of Handy and the Royal Ox, they tried to push them round by main force.



"Stop! Stop! It's no use," panted Tip-Topper, as Nox letting out a frightful bellow, laid seven Topsies by the pegs with his left hind foot, and Handy with a sweep of her arms swept down ten more. "They're all made wrong. Fetch the Turn Coat, drive them to the turning point and we'll turn them to Topsies in two shakes of a tent pole."

"M—mmmmm! M—mmmmm! Did you hear what I heard?" Nox peered desperately around at Handy, who was now spinning dizzily herself, as she was flung and pushed from one group to another. "Could they really turn us to Topsies?"

"I don't know! I don't know! Oh my head, my HEAD!" moaned the Goat Girl, clutching it with all hands. "It's going round and round—"

"Fine! Fine! That's the way!" cheered the Topsies heartily. "You'll be spinning circles before you know it and have beautiful wool like the rest of us."

"Wool!" gasped Handy, who was extremely proud of her shining yellow braids. "Oh, I wool not, that's just too much! Stand back you little buzzards and I'll show you a turn or two myself."

"Go ahead," said Turn Uppins, who seemed next in importance to Tip-Topper himself. "It's your turn anyway. Stand back Topsies, and let this waddling whangus show us what she can do."

At a signal from their leader the Turn Towners fell back a pace and spinning in a loud agitated circle, impatiently waited for the Goat Girl to take her turn. First Handy shook her head to dispel the dizziness, then with a loud screech, she flung her arms and heels into the air in such a succession of hand springs that even the Topsies were impressed. The seventh brought her back to the Royal Ox

and in the center of a now cheering and admiring circle, she turned fifty more so fast that she looked like an animated cartwheel with arms and leg's for spokes. A loud buzz of applause went up as Handy finally fell over from sheer exhaustion, but then they began pointing accusing fingers at Nox.

"Look! Look at the stupid Gumflumox, why he hasn't turned a single hair."

"How about turning on them," raged Nox, "and tossing a few dozen on my horns? Hop on my back, m'lass, and we'll make a run for it."

"No! No! There are too many, we'll be perfectly punctured," worried Handy, as seven Topsies prodded the Royal Ox sharply in the flank. "We might run right into that turning point, too. Wait! Wait! I'll think of something. We don't want to spin on here forever, whatever happens! Whew—hewey, what a dust the little pests kick up. I'd give my best hand for a drink, I'm choking with thirst. Oh! Oh! I wish I were in a river right this minute." Steadying herself by holding to Nox's right horn, Handy faced the angry multitude.

"Turn! Turn! Take your turn!" shouted the Topsies incessantly. "Can't you even turn your head old four-leg!"

"Of course he can," shouted Handy Mandy, clapping six of her hands for silence. "Not only his head, but his horns. Watch this, my friends!" The Goat Girl gave the horn she was leaning on a sharp twist.



"Not that one. Not that one!" fumed the Ox anxiously. "Quick, the other—it's the other one, I tell you! Oh, my hide, hair, and Heavens! Ulp! Gurgle Oooooop!"

And "Oooooop gurgle ULP!" it was with everyone, for at Handy Mandy's second turn, Nox's horn came completely off and as the goat girl held it up for the Topsies to see, out spurted a perfect torrent of water that flooded the whole city till every Turner and Topsy-turvy house in it was awash or afloat. In wild and astonished voices the kinky headed little citizens called out to each other as they bobbed up and down like corks on the raging tide. And just as wet and surprised as the Topsies, the Goat Girl and Nox were swept along by the impetuous flood.

Chapter 7: A Horn of Plenty

After the first awful ducking, Handy, without losing a second began to practice her swimming. Striking out with strength and purpose and her seven good arms she managed to keep abreast of Nox, who was moving easily along in the center

of the torrent. Bothersome as the Topsies had been, the Goat Girl could not help feeling sorry for the little Turn Towners. At first, she feared they would all go down. But they just spun round like water bugs on the surface and, while they made no progress, seemed in little danger of drowning. In fact they could no more sink than corks or kindling. So, busy with her own struggles, Handy dismissed them from her mind and tried to figure out the reason for the sudden and overwhelming rush of water that had deluged the city.

At any rate it was fine to be rid of the Topsies, she reflected philosophically, and when the flood did recede, Turn Town would be good as new and twice as clean. The current was racing along so swiftly now, the last Topsy had long since disappeared, leaving only herself and Nox in the broad tumbling expanse of water. Nox had not uttered a word since his first outcry when the flood had overtaken them, but he looked so glum and disagreeable that Handy, thrashing along beside him, wondered what would be the best way to start a conversation. As it happened, the Royal beast saved her the trouble by starting one himself.



"Well," he snorted bitterly. "I see you still have it."

"WHAT?" gulped the Goat Girl, forgetting to use her arms for a moment and in consequence, shipping about a bucket of water. "Ulp—gulp—have what?"

"My horn. HORN!" gurgled Nox, glaring at her angrily over a wave. "And if in the future you will keep your hands, all of them, off my horns, it will be the better for us." This seemed to Handy a very unjust and unreasonable attitude for Nox to take, but she was too occupied keeping afloat to stop and argue the matter.

"Swim closer and I'll screw it back," she offered, obligingly holding up the wooden hand in which she still clutched the right half of the royal headgear. But at this, poor Nox was deluged by a robust stream that still poured from the golden horn. Hastily plunging it under the surface again, Handy watched her fellow adventurer emerge sputtering and furious from the depths.

"Well of all the stupid tricks!" gasped the Ox, swimming rapidly away from her. "Stop—keep off—don't you dare come near me."

"But see here," panted Handy, going after him in real exasperation. "After all it is your horn, and am I to blame if there is a river inside? What do you want me to do, throw it away?"

"No! No!" bellowed the Ox, stopping short and looking frantically over his shoulder. "If you throw it away I'll look like a fool, if you keep holding it we'll spend the rest of our lives swimming round in this torrent—if you screw it back on my head—it will probably give me water on the brain. Oh—blub glub! what shall we do? THINK of something, can't you, before we both drown in your stupid old river?"

"My river!" Handy Mandy was so indignant that for a moment she was perfectly speechless.

"Yes, your river!" roared Nox, treading water angrily. "Didn't you wish for a river just before you jerked off my horn. Well, this is it and I hope you like it."

"Why Nox, how clever of you to guess," bubbled the Goat Girl, a great light breaking over her wet head. "I remember now, I was thirsty and wished for a drink, then a whole river, and lo! a river was here."

"You mean HIGH it was here," raged Nox, beginning to swim again.

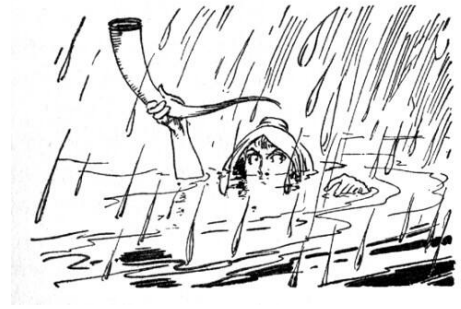
"But look," cried Handy, beating and slapping the water exultantly with her many hands. "If that is so, all we have to do is to wish it away again. I'm still holding the horn and there's magic in it, old Toddywax—MAGIC! I here and now wish this river AWAY."

Handy yelled her wish in a booming voice that almost split the Ox's ear-drums and both were so sure the wish would be granted they stopped swimming, so both had a fine ducking as the river continued to rush merrily and unconcernedly over their heads.

"Bosh! It wasn't magic after all. My—y, if I ever get out of here, I'll never go swimming again as long as I live," sobbed Handy, pushing her arms and legs wearily through the water.

"Oh, I think I'll just sink and be done with it," moaned the Ox, churning breathlessly along beside her.

"You think you'll sink!" exclaimed Handy, popping her head up indignantly. "Don't you dare sink and leave me here all alone. Besides, we set out to find that little King and we're going to find him! Where's your sporting blood?"



"Watered!" gurgled the Royal Ox in a faint voice. "Goodbye, m'lass, you probably did it all for the best!" It seemed to the Goat Girl that Nox was really sinking so, flinging out her leather hand, she grasped him firmly by his left horn. Then, acting quickly, and before he could object, Handy pushed his head under water and quickly screwed his right horn in place.



"I wish this dumb river would go straight back where it came from," quavered Handy as Nox bellowing and bubbling backed indignantly away. And THIS time the river went. So suddenly and completely the Goat Girl and the Ox were dropped forty feet to the bottom of a rocky gorge through which the torrent had been tumbling. For a long moment they lay where they had fallen, then stiffly they arose and peered anxiously around them. Handy, thanks to her voluminous petticoats, was saved from serious injury and Nox, who had landed in a patch of brush was not dangerously hurt, either. But they both were so shocked, shaken and worn out from their long swim they were perfectly content to stay where they were.

"You see," sighed Handy, wringing out her skirts with four hands and smoothing back her hair with the other three. "The magic is in the horn and only works when you are wearing it. As soon as I screwed it back and made the wish everything was all right."

"Oh, was it?" Scowling round at his scratched flanks and skinned shins, the Royal Ox shook his head dubiously.

"And just think," continued the Goat Girl brightly. "If your horn really is a wishing horn, as soon as we decide where we want to go, all we have to do is wish ourselves there."

"No! No! Absolutely no more of that," squealed Nox, lashing his tail and flashing his eyes dangerously. "Your last wish nearly killed me, and if any more wishing is to be done, I'll attend to it myself."

"But how can you unscrew, or even touch your own horn all by yourself?" inquired Handy reasonably. "You see, you need my hands, and I need your horns." Throwing back her head, Handy burst into a loud chuckle, thinking how comical she would look if she actually wore Nox's golden headgear.

"Oh, why not go on the way we started?" said the Ox querulously. "I'd rather travel on my feet than my horns any day, and had you noticed, Handy, that these rocks are purple? Your river has carried us clear into the Gillikin Country where there are mountains galore and even a silver one for all we know."



"Yes, but is there anything to eat?" asked the Goat Girl in a hollow voice. "If those rude little Topsies had just given us some breakfast."

"I expect all they eat is spinach or turnips," sniffed Nox, "and you would not have cared for either. Well, at any rate we're even. You certainly turned the tide on them, m'lass." Nox, who was beginning to feel more cheerful, began to shake all over. "I'll wager my tail they'll be more polite to travellers in the future."

"Well, as it all turned out so well, let's make another wish," proposed Handy Mandy practically. "Let's wish ourselves out of here. No use scrambling over all these rocks, when all we have to do is to wish ourselves to the spot where your little King happens to be."

"M-m-mm, M-m-m!" mused Nox, half closing his eyes. "Nothing is as easy as that, and I cannot help feeling—"

"Neither can I," said Handy, and stepping briskly up to the royal Ox, she gave his right horn a determined twist, at the same time saying softly: "I wish myself and Nox with Kerry, the rightful ruler of Keretaria." Nox twitched his ears nervously as his horn came off in the Goat Girl's best white hand and Handy herself, with all her arms outspread as if she were a bird about to take flight, waited in rapturous expectation for her wish to take effect. But this time nothing at all happened. Neither she nor the Ox moved an inch.

"There you are, I told you it wouldn't work," grumbled Nox, looking at her crossly. "It's probably not magic at all."

"Oh yes it is," insisted Handy, screwing up her eye and peering down into the hollow interior. "It gave us a river when we asked for it and you can't get away from that."

"We certainly had a hard enough time getting away from it," agreed her companion. "Come now, be a good girl, screw back that horn and let's be starting on."



"But I just cannot understand why it grants some wishes and not others," muttered Handy discontentedly. "When I was thirsty and wished for a river, I got a river—A-HA! I have it. This horn gives you things but does not take you places. Now let's see, what do we need the most?"

"Breakfast," suggested the Ox in an interested voice. "Oats and apples for me, eggs, rolls and coffee for you. But for GOAT'S sake be careful how you wish, m'lass. We don't want too much even of a good thing, and one can drown in coffee or smother in oats. Remember the river and be exact as to size and quantity."

"My—y, this wishing is dreadfully complicated." Rubbing her forehead with one hand after the other, Handy Mandy prepared to order breakfast. First she screwed the right horn back on the head of the Ox, then pursing her lips firmly, she spoke: "I wish for Nox, two measures of oats and apples, for myself, two plates of eggs and rolls and one cup of coffee." Turning the horn round till it came off once more, the Goat Girl almost held her breath as the two breakfasts were set promptly and noiselessly down on the rock at her feet.

"Now you're getting the idea!" Happily Nox advanced upon his breakfast.

"Say, isn't this simply manubious?" cried Handy, snapping her thirty-five fingers for sheer joy. "Why, Nox, your horn is a real horn of plenty!"

"And plenty of trouble if you don't watch your wishes," mumbled her partner, already up to his ears in oats.

"Oh, I'll be careful, never fear," promised Handy, screwing the horn back on its base and falling upon her breakfast with a right good will and appetite. "Won't the eyes of the villagers at home stick out when I tell them about this?"

"Yes, provided you ever GET home," observed the Ox, who seemed always to take a dark view of the future. But Handy Mandy, popping the last of the biscuits into her mouth, scarcely heard him. Now that they need no longer worry about provisions for the journey, she felt that they would safely reach the Silver Mountain wherever it might be, rescue the little King from his enemies and restore him to his throne. Then after seeing all she wished of the marvelous country of Oz, she would return to Mt. Mern and startle the country folk with the amazing story of her travels.



"Come along," she called gaily. "Let's climb out of here." With some astonishment they watched the empty containers and dishes vanish away, and then saying very little but thinking a great deal, the two adventurers began to scramble up the rocky sides of the gorge.

Chapter 8: Handy Mandy Learns about Oz!

Handy, who had climbed up and down mountains all her life, reached the top of the gorge first and with her various hands tugged Nox up the last steep incline.

"So—this is the Gillikin Country!" panted the Goat Girl, staring away over the heather covered Highlands. "Now about the natives, do they spin, bounce or tumble?"

"That, I really couldn't say," gasped Nox, leaning against a tree to regain his wind, "but as you can see, my girl, all the hills, trees and vegetation shade from violet to purple. Lovely color, purple!"

"I suppose purple would appeal to a Royal Ox like you." Resting her hands on her hips, Handy Mandy squinted critically about her. "Now as for me, I prefer the more cheerful colors, red, yellow or green, for instance."



"Then you'd like the Quadling and Winkie Countries," murmured Nox, nibbling languidly at the tops of the heather, "or the Emerald City. We have all color countries in Oz and a body can take his choice."

"Oh, we'll just take them as they come," decided the Goat Girl sensibly, "or at least, till we find your young Master and this Silver Mountain. But tell me, Nox, is each country in Oz a different color and is there really an Emerald City?" Moving slowly through the heather the Royal Ox nodded his lordly head.

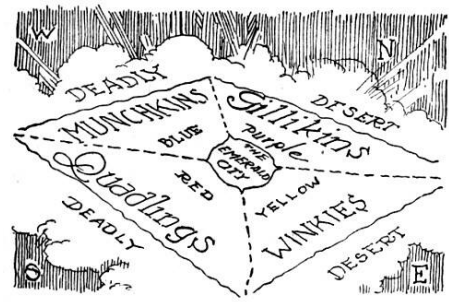
"Take that stick," he directed, coming to a ponderous stop, "and I'll show you how Oz looks. See, on that level bit of sand there, just draw an oblong." Quite interested, Handy marked out an oblong with the point of the stick. "Connect the corners," breathed the Ox, lifting his forefoot complacently, "and what have you?"

"Four triangles," answered the Goat Girl promptly.

"Put a circle in the center where all the triangles meet." Nox fairly radiated pride and importance as his geozophy lesson progressed.

"Then what?" demanded Handy, the stick upraised in her rubber hand.

"That's all!" Tossing back his horns, the Ox surveyed his pupil triumphantly. "Simple, isn't it? That triangle on the west is the blue Munchkin Country we have just left, the triangle to the north is the purple Gillikin Country we are just entering. Over there on the east, we have the Yellow empire of the Winkies and to the south the red lands of the Quadlings. In the circle is the Emerald City of Oz, and surrounding the whole Kingdom is a deadly desert of burning sand."



"My—y!" marveled the Goat Girl, clasping all her hands but one behind her back, "the desert I crossed when I fell in Keretaria?"

"Of course," answered Nox, snapping lazily at a purple dragon fly. "Mt. Mern must lie to the west of Oz, on the other side of the deadly desert. There are many countries beyond the desert, but I know very little about them as there are only Oz maps in the castle at home."

"Then I suppose the King of Keretaria is King of the Munchkins?" said Handy, looking thoughtfully down at her map.

"Oh, my, no!" The Royal Ox positively chuckled at such an idea. "Keretaria is just one of the small countries of the West. Cheeriohed is King of the Munchkins and he lives in the Sapphire City seventy leagues below our southernmost borderline. Glinda, the Good Sorceress, rules all the small Kingdoms in the Quadling Country, the Tin Woodman of Oz is Emperor of the Winkies and Jo King governs the Gillikins. Besides these, there are Kings, Queens and Princes galore, but most important of all is Ozma, the young Fairy who lives in the Emerald City, for Ozma is supreme sovereign of the entire Kingdom of Oz."

"Dear—ear what a lot to remember," groaned the Goat Girl. "And all these other Kings and Queens have to do what Ozma says? However does she keep track of them all? I'll bet they're worse than a flock of goats."



"Oh, she manages," said the Ox, beginning to move slowly forward. "Being a fairy and having a wizard right in her own castle, Ozma knows what is going on without even turning her head."

"Even where we are going?" exclaimed Handy Mandy indignantly. "Hi—yi—what a little busy-body. I just know I won't like her."

"Well, in that case she will just have to give up her throne and throw her crown out of the window, I suppose! Better have a care, m'lass, you're speaking of a powerful fairy, you know." Nox looked so stern as he went plowing through the heather, Handy began to feel a little uneasy herself.

"But how could a fairy in the center of Oz see way off here?" she demanded scornfully.

"Magic, that's how!" explained Nox, looking very calm and superior. "In her castle Ozma has a magic picture that shows her everything she wishes to see."

"I don't believe it," scoffed the Goat Girl, swinging all her arms recklessly, "and besides, why would she wish to see us and this particular piece of country at this particular minute?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said the Royal Ox haughtily. "But I do say, be careful. There, what did I tell you!" Framed in the woodwork of a small summer-house they were approaching was a large poster.

"You are now in the Land of Oz," stated the poster, pleasantly enough. "Be good to us and we'll be good to you. Keep our laws and practice no magic, either for good or evil. By order of Her Imperial Highness, Queen Ozma of Oz." Below was the bright green seal of Oz and a picture of its pretty dark haired ruler.



"Why she's nothing but a little girl!" cried Handy, positively aghast at such a state of affairs. "How could a little mite like that rule a whole country and be so bossy?"

"Oh, hush!" begged Nox, rolling his eyes anxiously. "Mite or not, Ozma is a

mighty powerful and important fairy."

"Well, we're pretty important ourselves," sniffed the Goat Girl, squinting at the poster with all her arms akimbo. "And besides," Handy lifted her chin defiantly, "we've broken the law already when we used your gold horn of plenty. 'Practice no magic.' Hoh! What does she expect us to do with good magic right at hand—starve? But, ho ho! We can get around that, old Toggins. After all, we are not practicing magic, we don't have to practice it—our magic is perfect, so put that in your pipe and smoke it Miss Ozma to Bozma." Snatching up a rock in each of her seven hands, Handy flung them hilariously over a clump of prune trees. (Yes, prunes already wrinkled grow in the Land of Oz.) There was an uncomfortable little silence after Handy's rash outburst, then a perfect tempest of shrieks and screeches.

"Now, see what you've done," gulped the Ox, switching his tail nervously. "Quick, quick, jump on my back and we'll rush by. These chaps look dangerous."

"Why, they have HOOK noses!" sputtered Handy, too startled to move, as a band of kilted Highlanders came racing down toward them. The noses of these singular Hill-men were long and thin, curving out and up far above their foreheads. On these hooks hung dangerous looking rings almost as large as barrel hoops. While Handy was wondering what they could be for, the nearest Hooker pulled a ring from his nose and flung it with all his might at her head.



"Up. UP!" bellowed Nox, pawing the ground in his agitation. "Are you going to stand there till you are pegged like a top?" The iron ring missed Handy by mere inches and grasping Nox's horn she pulled herself to his back. There were about sixty of the hook noses, and swinging to the left, Nox tried to skirt the war-like tribe, but they were too quick for him, and spreading out in a long line they began hurling their wicked whizzing weapons. One caught neatly on the horn of the Royal Ox, another hit Handy a horrid blow on the knee, and as Nox, snorting and furious turned to run, a dozen more came whanging down about their ears. Dodging left and right, Handy Mandy leaned forward and began to unscrew Nox's right horn.

"Be good to us and we'll be good to you!' HOH! Like fun you will!" muttered the Goat Girl, catching six of the flying missiles in her clever hands and tossing them back with all her might. "Take that and these and them and THOSE!" Pulling off the Ox's horn with the only hand she had left, she added desperately, "I wish a barrel of molasses over the head of each Hook Nose in this band. Cats, Bats and Billy Goats! They've GOT me!" And they had, too, for just as Handy finished her wish, down flashed an iron ring pinioning her arms tightly to her sides. Still grasping the precious horn, Handy dug her heels into Nox.



"Hurt?" grunted the Ox, leaping forward.

"Not hurt, just hooked and humiliated, can't move a muscle," raged the Goat Girl. "But ha ha! Neither can they! LOOK!" Nox, who had been bellowing too hard to hear Handy's wish or miss his horn glanced back hurriedly.

"Why! What's come over them?" he wheezed in astonishment. "Who snuffed them out with barrels and what's that sticky fluid running all around?"

"Molasses," Handy told him with extreme satisfaction as she tried vainly to wriggle out of her ring. "I wished barrels of molasses on their heads and we'd better dash on while they're stopped and stuck with it."

"Then you've been breaking the law again," reproached Nox, dodging in and out and around their frantic enemies.

"Well, as between broken heads and broken laws, I choose the laws. Besides, look what they did to me!" exclaimed the Goat Girl indignantly. "I may never get this hoop off or be able to lift a hand again. Nice people you have in Oz, I must say."

"If you hadn't hit them with stones, they wouldn't have hit us with hoops," Nox reminded her sternly, at the same time breaking into a gallop to put as much distance as possible between himself and the troublesome Gillikins. A few had managed to lift the barrels from their heads, but most of them were rolling over and over on the ground, half choked with rage and molasses.

"When we stop I think I can help you," promised Nox, looking anxiously at Handy, who was now quite purple in the face from her struggles with the hoop. "Just forget it, can't you, and think of the interesting people we are meeting. I'll wager you have no hook noses on Mt. Mern!"

"I should say NOT!" sputtered the Goat Girl in disgust, and then realizing she was making no progress with the ring, sensibly gave up the attempt to free herself. Somewhat comforted by the thought that the Hook Noses were probably as uncomfortable as she was, Handy kept a sharp lookout for natives. If they ran into any more she wanted to be sure of seeing them first.

But the rocky hills and glades were entirely deserted and at every step the way became more mountainous and lonely. Nox, panting and wheezing from the long pull, slackened his pace to a walk. Handy Mandy with some difficulty managed to dismount, and the Ox slipping his horn under the offending ring, gently forced it upward till the Goat Girl was able to wiggle free. Then together they climbed up the flinty inclines—up and up till they came to a wide ledge and a sparkling waterfall. Here they had a drink without having to wish for one, Nox sticking his head right into the water and Handy cupping three pairs of her hands to hold enough to satisfy her thirst.

"Ho hum," sighed the Ox, "I wonder how much farther we'll have to go before we can find anyone who can direct us to this Silver Mountain? I'm sure I saw some castles when we were below."

"So did I," said Handy, screwing his right horn back with a businesslike flourish. "My—y, seems a long time since we started from Keretaria. Do you suppose they have missed us yet?"



"Probably," yawned the Ox, scratching his back against a rock, while Handy, suddenly deciding she needed another drink, stepped close to the waterfall. But instead of quenching her thirst, the Goat Girl spilled water all over her feet.

"Nox! Nox!" she screamed, jerking all her thumbs in his direction. "Come! Look here! There's a big hollow behind this waterfall—a high wall of rock with a door in it! I can see it!"



"Well," sniffed the Ox, rubbing his back luxuriously, "does it say 'come in'? Must we try every door we come to?"

"Yes," Handy Mandy told him firmly, "we must! Where there's a door there's bound to be a door-keeper or at least someone who might tell us where we are. Now then, I'll jump through the waterfall first and knock on the door. There wouldn't be room for you on the ledge until the door is open."

"Sounds risky!" objected the Royal Ox, putting back his ears. "What kind of people would live behind a waterfall? Ask yourself that." But the Goat Girl, without stopping to ask herself anything, had already plunged through the misty sheet of water, and gasping and spluttering was hammering on the door with all seven of her fists.

Chapter 9: The Magic Hammer

There was no answer to Handy's loud knocks, and pausing to catch her breath and blow on her fingers, the Goat Girl wondered what to try next. Then, in spite of Nox's warning bellow, she began to shove and push the wet planks with her shoulder. But that did no good either, so she felt in her pocket for something to use as a wedge. Almost at once her fingers closed on the silver hammer they had ploughed up in Keretaria. While the hammer would not do for a wedge, it would at least save her knuckles, so, lifting it high above her head, Handy Mandy brought it down with a resounding whack. A shower of silver sparks followed the hammer blow, and Nox, peering through the waterfall saw a gnarled and crooked elf with a purple beard dancing madly round the startled girl.



"I am the elf of the hammer, who
Must do whatever you ask me to,"
sang the elf between his high leaps and prances.

"Then open this door," directed Handy, spinning round in a circle herself to get a good look at the little fellow. "My—y, how funny Oz is! Magic horns, Topsies, Hook Noses and now you! Don't tell me a little body like you can really open this great heavy door?"

"Pick up the hammer and doubt no more—
Himself, the elf, will now open the door."

In a daze Handy Mandy picked up the hammer and put it back in her pocket, and Nox, thunderstruck by the whole proceeding thrust his head through the waterfall just in time to see the knobby little gnome push the door open with one thump of his brown fist. Quick as a flash Handy was on the other side.

"Come on! Come on!" she called hoarsely to Nox. "Can't you see it's closing? Oh mercy—ercy, do you want to leave me here all alone?"

"Yes!" snorted Nox in an exasperated voice, but jumping as he snorted. "I'd like nothing better." As he came to 'better,' he landed on the other side of the waterfall and skidded through the open door into the mountain. He had just time to tuck in his tail, when the door with an ominous creak slammed shut.



"Now, see what you've done!" gasped Nox, eyeing the gloomy interior with distaste and foreboding. "I—thought—you—were going to be a help to me and all—puff—splutter—you do is get me into trouble! What sort of place is this anyway?"

"A c-c-ave," quavered Handy, wrapping all her arms tightly round herself. "My—y, it's so high—igh, I can hardly see the top. Where's that elf?"

"Gone!" sighed the Ox, taking a cautious step forward. "But I expect he'll come back at the first tap of that hammer. All very puzzling if you ask me."

"Well, shall I call him back?" asked Handy uneasily. "It's kinda lonely in here and maybe Himself could tell us where we are."

"Better wait till we need him," advised the Ox. "After all, we know we are in a cave, seems to be of silver rock, too. Just cast your eye at those stalactites, m'lass."

"So that's what you call 'em," the Goat Girl glanced curiously up at the silver icicles hanging in jagged points from the ceiling. "We have caves on Mt. Mern, but nothing like this." She looked apprehensively round the silent cavern, from which a perfect honeycomb of passageways branched off in all directions. "A fine place to get lost, I'd call it," she shivered, moving as close as she could to her companion. "What makes this lavender light? I see no lamps."

"Jewels!" confided the Ox in a hushed voice. "See, there are hundreds of amethysts embedded in those rocks, each glowing like—"

"An eye!" finished Handy nervously. "And all watching us, I dare say. My—y, do you suppose anyone lives here? But they must—" Unwinding her arms, Handy suddenly began snapping all thirty-five of her fingers. "Nox, Nox!" she cried excitedly. "I've just thought of something!"

"Can't you think without shouting?" asked the Ox, flashing his eyes suspiciously from left to right.

"No," said Handy triumphantly, "for this is something to shout about. Look, old Toggins, if this is a silver cave, why wouldn't a Silver Mountain be on top? All we have to do is open that door and start climbing again."

"As I remember there was a sheer precipice back of the waterfall, how could we climb that? No, no! The best thing for us to do is to travel down one of the passageways and hope it will bring us out on the side of the mountain itself."

"Yes, but which one?" demanded the Goat Girl.
"There are about a hundred it seems to me."

"Let's try that first one to the right," proposed the Ox judiciously. Their voices echoed and reverberated back and forth so uncannily in the big hollow cavern that almost without realizing it they began to talk in whispers and tread as softly as thieves in the night. Half-way to their destination they stopped, rigid with horror and consternation. Thumping footsteps were coming toward them from the labyrinth on the left.



"Someone does live here, after all," said the Goat Girl. "Someone who weighs a ton. Hark to that!"

"Watch yourself!" warned Nox, planting all four feet and making ready to charge if the cave dweller proved unfriendly.

"Oh, my aunt—a GIANT!" With a shrill scream Handy flung all her arms round Nox's neck and buried her face in his shoulder. Poor Nox, nearly strangled by the Goat Girl's embrace could neither move nor speak and could scarcely breathe. With rolling eyes and quaking legs he watched the monster approach. The Giant's body, almost ten times the size of a grizzly bear, was encased in a tight purple uniform with bells instead of buttons that jingled whenever he moved. He wore a huge silver helmet, and his neck, almost a foot long, kept darting up and down as he shot his head in this direction and that.

"Ho! THERE you are!" he roared, suddenly catching sight of the two travellers trembling together in the center of the cavern. "How dare you enter the cave of the King of the Silver Mountain without invitation or permission?"

"Then this really IS the Silver Mountain!" marveled Handy, twisting her apron nervously in her wooden fingers.

"Of course!" yelled the giant, thumping the floor with an enormous silver club. "And I, Snorpus the Mighty, am Keeper of the Hidden Door. I am OUTKEEPER for this whole mountain," he boasted truculently expanding his chest and looking complacently down at the two midgets at his feet. But something in his manner began to reassure the Goat Girl.



"I'll bet he's dumb as he's big," she confided hurriedly to Nox. Then raising her voice and all of her arms, she called up loudly, "Then you must indeed be strong and sturdy!"

"Oh, I AM!" bawled the Giant, twirling his silver moustache and fixing Handy for a moment with his glittering eye. "Snorpus the Door Keeper is strong as an OX!" There was something very peculiar about the eye of the Giant. It seemed to revolve on a moving belt, peering out as it passed through the four wide open lids set at intervals round the top of his head, so that half the time he was looking the other way.

"Did you ever see an ox?" inquired Handy politely as the eye of Snorpus again flashed by.

"No, but I'd like to," admitted the Giant, shooting his head out to the side.

"Well, this is an ox," cried Handy, tapping the anxious beast at her side with a rubber hand. "And if you are strong as an ox you are strong as Nox and nothing much can stop you."

"How strong is he?" asked Snorpus, lowering himself stiffly to one knee in order to get a look at what he had first supposed to be a small and insignificant animal.

"So strong," explained the Goat Girl impressively, as she pointed with all hands to the side of the cave, "that if he so much as bumped into that wall yonder, this whole cavern would collapse like a pack of cards."

"Then I hope he'll be very careful," faltered Snorpus, taking out a huge silk handkerchief to mop his forehead. "It would annoy the King frightfully if you destroyed his cavern, and I might even lose my head and position here."

"Oh, he'll be careful," promised Handy Mandy generously. "He, being an ox, and you being strong as an ox, makes us all friends, doesn't it?"

"I—I suppose so," muttered Snorpus, tapping his knee uncertainly with his club. "But just the same, I am still the outkeeper and must do my duty at all hazards. AT ALL HAZARDS!" he shouted, standing up to give himself courage and puffing out his cheeks like a porpoise.



"But you have done your duty," bellowed Nox in a voice even louder than the door keeper's. "If we were outside the mountain it would be your plain duty to keep us there, but since we are already inside, you have nothing more to do with us. Isn't that so?" Lowering his head, Nox made a little lunge at the Giant's shins. And backing away, Snorpus gave the pair several long puzzled looks.

"Well, then," he decided finally, "if I have nothing more to do with you, you had best come along to the King."

"That is exactly what we wish to do," answered the Goat Girl promptly.

"My, you are brave, aren't you?" The Giant's eye flashed for a moment in real admiration upon Handy Mandy, then, picking up his club, he began clumping away to the left.

"Now I wonder what he meant by that?" puffed Nox, for they both had to run to even keep the Giant in sight.

"I don't know," gasped Handy, "but never mind what he means. We still have your golden horn and the silver hammer and will manage somehow. But imagine getting right inside the Silver Mountain and never knowing it!"

"Yes, and we may go out the same way," predicted the Royal Ox gloomily, following the Giant down the wide glittering corridor. "I never did like these tunnely places or people."



Chapter 10: The King of the Silver Mountain

"I hear water," worried Handy as Snorpus suddenly vanished round a bend in the corridor. "Oh, dear—ear, I do hope we won't have to go swimming again."

"Then mind your manners!" warned the Royal Ox, giving his horns a little shake. "Remember it is safer to keep on the right side of Kings and Giants, and if we are to learn anything about Kerry we must be extremely patient and polite."

A loud gasp interrupted Nox's speech, for Handy Mandy, well in the lead, had also stepped round the bend. Hastening to catch up with her, the Ox, too, gave an involuntary exclamation of wonder and astonishment.



The silver corridor had brought them into a second cavern, smaller than the entrance cave, but so light and lacy, so bright and beautiful, for once Handy Mandy stood perfectly speechless. The silver sides of the dome-shaped grotto had been carved to show all the historical figures and characters of ancient Oz. Wizards, giants, knights, witches, huntsmen, robbers, kings, queens and their patient subjects marched in a splendid procession round the walls. Sparkling lavender sand covered the floor and a lake of shimmering quicksilver took up the entire center, lapping the shore with its swift soundless waves. On a small island of purest amethyst in the middle of this lake the King of the Silver Mountain reclined at ease. His back was toward the newcomers and he seemed lost in some deep and entirely satisfactory contemplation.



"A king, if I ever saw one," breathed Nox moistly in Handy's ear. With a wordless nod the Goat Girl agreed, for in this long, indolent yet majestic figure Handy felt she was seeing royalty for the first time. The unusual height of the silver monarch was at once apparent and his tight-fitting suit of deepest purple, without ornament save for his jeweled belt and sword, set off his handsome figure to the best advantage. His hair, of an astonishing thickness, was as silver as his cavern. When he turned his head, as he presently did at a little cough from Snorpus, Handy saw that his eyes were of a clear and piercing violet. Quietly and without hurry, the Silver King rose and, picking up his filigreed

crown, set it firmly on his head. Then, retrieving a long-stemmed pipe from a crevice in the rock, he established himself in a seat carved from the amethyst and looked inquiringly across at his visitors.

"So," he whistled, his eyes sparkling with lively interest as they rested for a long moment on the Goat Girl. "Two very, VERY clever travellers."

"Why do you say that?" blurted out Handy, and was instantly overcome at her own boldness in speaking to so grand a person.

"The fact that you are here in this cavern proves you are clever," answered the King, leaning over to fill his pipe in the quicksilver lake. "You have opened the door in the mountain that does not open; passed the impassable guardian and keeper of that door—SNORPUS!!" The King's pleasant voice changed so quick and cruelly, Handy almost lost her balance. "What have you to say for yourself, you lazy Bozwokel?" roared His Majesty, his eyes flashing flinty sparks of purple. "I'll have you potted for this, potted and reduced to a smithing smith, do you hear?"

Poor Snorpus, who could not have helped hearing the King's booming sentence, dropped to his knees and began pleading, explaining and blubbing all in the same breath. Even Nox, startled as he was, tried to put in a good word for him. But the muttering monarch, paying no attention to any of them, had lifted his silver pipe to his lips and an enormous bubble was rising from the bowl. Handy, with chattering teeth, watched the bubble grow larger and larger, float off the pipe and hover over the unlucky head of the Giant. As Snorpus tried in vain to dodge, the bubble broke with the sound like a doomsday bell, enveloping him in a cloudy mist. When it cleared away, the Giant was indeed reduced, coming now scarcely to Handy's shoulder.

"How about it, shall we run?" whispered the Goat Girl as the King began to blow another bubble. "Boy, do I feel a draft!"

"But he's not mad at us!" answered the Ox, ducking nervously as the second bubble soared over their heads. "Wait! Be patient, remember the little King." As Nox finished speaking the bubble sailed off and away down one of the silver corridors leading away from the royal cavern. Presently they heard a bell ringing in the distance as the bubble broke, and before you could say Pop Robinson seventy silver-jacketed little bell boys came trotting into the cave.



"Take this poor failure to Nifflepok and see that he is potted," directed the King sternly, setting down his bubble pipe. "Have Timano guard the mountain door and see that I am not disturbed. Important matters have come up this morning, important matters!"

"Yes! Yes! Your Highness! It shall be done, Your Excellency!" mumbled the bell boys, pushing poor Snorpus ahead of them.

"Watch yourselves! Watch yourselves!" warned the little Giant as he was rudely hustled out of the royal presence.

"Now," smiled the Silver King, positively beaming upon his visitors, "now we can proceed with our conversation. Sorry to trouble you with this small matter, but discipline, as the old army officers will tell you, discipline must be maintained."

"Humph!" sniffed Handy Mandy under her breath, looking with dislike and disillusion at the royal figure on the rocks. "The Giant was right, you're a fellow who'll bear watching." Fortunately her words did not carry, and lazily glancing at them through his long purple lashes the Silver King continued his speech.



"Since you have so easily entered my mountain," he observed blandly, "I assume you have some powerful magic treasure or appliance in your possession. Am I right?" At the sudden forward lurch of the Royal Ox and Handy Mandy's surprised expression, the King gave a satisfied little nod. "Fine!" he chuckled, rubbing his hands together briskly. "And now, let us waste no more time. WHO sent you? WHAT have you to offer? As you doubtless know, the Wizard of Wutz pays well for magic treasures and formulas."

"Wizard!" choked Handy Mandy, carelessly clapping her iron hand to her forehead and knocking herself over backward. "Wizard!" she repeated, dazedly picking herself up. "But I thought you were a King?"

"I am both!" stated the owner of the cavern proudly. "I am King of the Silver Mountain and also the Wizard of Wutz, second in importance only to Glinda and the Wizard of Oz. And, ha! ha! it won't be long before I am the ONLY wizard, the sole, supreme and only Wizard of Oz! Not long! Not long!" Again the Silver King rubbed his hands exultantly together. "I have my secret agents in every Kingdom in this country and even in the Emerald City of Oz," he told them impressively. "I already have the Record Book of Glinda, the Good Sorceress, and many more of the magic treasures of Oz, and soon I will have them all—ALL! My agents are clever and I have trained them well."

"But I thought magic was against the law!" cried Nox with an outraged snort. "I

understood no one was allowed to practice magic but Ozma, Glinda and the Wizard of Oz!"

"Then why are you here?" demanded Wutz sternly. "YOU have been practicing magic or you could not have entered this mountain. Come, now, let us stop all this nonsense and get down to silver tacks and business. What have you to offer? Who sent you—Three, Six, Nine, Five or Eleven?"

As you can imagine, this was perfect jargon to Nox and the Goat Girl, but Handy Mandy, convinced by this time that the Silver King was both sly and dangerous, resolved to fall in with his little supposition and see what would come of it.

"Nine sent us," she answered boldly, while Nox looked across at her in perfect stupefaction.

"You don't say! I rather thought you came from the Munchkin Country," mused the Wizard. "Something in the way the Ox talked, though you, yourself, are not a native Ozian?"

"No!" Handy said noncommittally, and rather pleased she had chosen Nine, since this number had something to do with the Munchkins.

"Did Nine say anything about the silver hammer?" asked the King, twinkling his eyes at the Goat Girl.

"He told us nothing," stated Handy quite truthfully, this time.

"That's Nine for you," fumed the King discontentedly. "He's the slowest and most unsatisfactory agent I have. Two years searching for that hammer and no report yet. I've a good notion to kick him out and put little King Kerry back on the throne. A bargain's a bargain and I've kept my part. Besides, I've got to have that hammer before I can make myself supreme ruler in Oz. Why, it's the second most important magic in the four Kingdoms!" At this surprising statement Handy pricked up her ears.

"What did you say about Kerry?" panted Nox, almost stepping into the quicksilver lake at mention of the little King.

"Nothing. I was talking about Nine," scowled the Wizard. "If that fellow does not show some action soon, I'll—I'll—" The King clenched his fists and looked so terribly angry that Handy was afraid he was going to blow bubbles again. But instead he glared across the lake and demanded impatiently, "Well, if you didn't bring the silver hammer, what did you bring?"

"A magic flower," explained the Goat Girl hurriedly, and before Nox could give away the fact that they did have the silver hammer. She could guess from the expression in his eye that he was about to offer the hammer in exchange for Kerry.

"A flower!" bawled Wutz, his face turning from red to purple. "My caves are full of flowers, frosted silver lilies, long-stemmed sterling roses, daisies and violets with jeweled centers. I can grow any kind of flower I wish. How dare you take up my time with a flower! PAH! Go back and tell Nine he had better look out—he's flirting with dismissal and destruction."



"But this flower saves you from injury when you fall," stammered Handy, heartily wishing she had never got herself into such a controversy.

"Fall!" sneered the Silver King, simply bounding off his throne. "I NEVER fall!" and had hardly finished speaking before he caught his toe on a jutting amethyst and pitched headlong to the rocks. Horrified, and without waiting for the irate monarch to regain his feet, Handy and Nox began to run toward one of the outgoing corridors, the Goat Girl colliding as she ran with a plump little dignitary in a jeweled robe and high hat.



"Your Highness! Your Highness!" puffed the little fat man, stopping long enough to glare at Handy Mandy. "At last our efforts are to be crowned with success! Five has but this moment arrived with—with—"

"With what?" demanded the King, springing lightly as a cat to his feet. "With a jug," exulted the little fat man, tossing his high hat into the air. "With a jug that was Rug and the magic picture of Queen Ozma herself."

"Ah, SPLENDID!" beamed the monarch, who could turn his smiles and rages on and off like electric lights. "That will be a lesson to those Emerald City-ites!" Then suddenly remembering Handy and Nox and his undignified fall, he shouted shrilly:

"Stop those imposters! Stop them, Nifflepok, and lock them up in the prison pits till I have time to demolish them. Hah! We'll pot the Ox's tongue, make soup of his tail, saddles and boots of his hide and use his head for a hat rack. As for that seven-armed monstrosity, she shall work in the polishing caves for the rest of her stupid life."

"I'll polish your nose first!" promised Handy, shaking all her fists at the King.

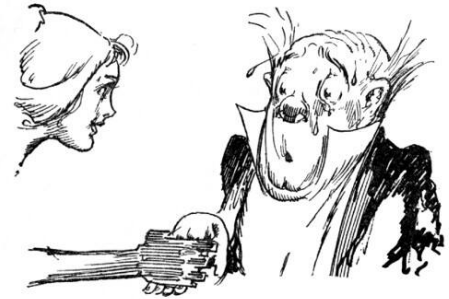
"Better come quiet," warned Nifflepok, looking so worried Handy felt a little sorry

for him. "Wutz'll blow bubbles if you make him too mad, and that'll be much worse than being locked up, you know."

"Oh, let's go with the Little High-Hat," groaned Nox, blinking his eyes at Handy to remind her they still had his horns and the silver hammer. "For my part, I'd like a little peace and quiet."

"Take 'em away! Take 'em away!" ordered the King, stamping up and down his rocky island. "Send in Five! Send in Five at once!"

"Come along, then," said Nifflepok, being careful to keep out of the way of Nox's horns. "Come, give me your hand, maiden. Not that one! Not THAT one!" he howled dismally as the Goat Girl clasped his outstretched fingers in her iron hand. "Let go! Let go!"



"Let's go! Let's go!" chuckled Handy Mandy mischievously. And squealing with pain the little Minister hurried them down a long dim passageway.

Chapter 11: Down to the Prisoners' Pit!

"Oh! Oh! Give me another hand and I'll do my best to help you," sputtered Nifflepok, as Handy Mandy ruthlessly continued to squeeze his fingers.

"We'll help ourselves, thank you," retorted the Goat Girl tartly. Then relenting a little, she relaxed her hold, for she could not help pitying Nifflepok and all the subjects of this cruel King. "Where are these prison pits?" she asked impatiently, for she was anxious to be alone with Nox. "If you are going to lock us up, do hurry along with it."



"Yes, yes, absolutely yes!" moaned Nifflepok, glancing nervously over his shoulder to be sure the white Ox was not going to tread on his heels. "You'll be there in no time, no time at all," he assured them earnestly. "Step over here, please." Moving a sliding door in the wall of the corridor, the King's assistant waved them toward a smooth wheelless silver carriage. It looked to Handy a lot like an old-fashioned sleigh, and as there were seats in front and a space in back large enough for the Ox, she let go Nifflepok's hand and quite willingly climbed aboard. Nox, grunting a little, stepped over the side and settled himself behind

her.

"Well, goodbye," sniffed Nifflepok, rubbing his bruised fingers tenderly. "You'll find everything you need below, not that you'll be needing anything," he added mournfully as he pulled out a silver switch. "Goodbye, I'm sorry for you!" he shouted as the car with a lurch that almost loosened Handy's teeth shot down a sliding runway to the deep pits of darkness below.



Now, you and I, who are used to scenic railways and have enjoyed the thrills of chute the chutes for years, would have been less startled by the wild dizzy leaps, the swoops, curves and climbs, and the sickening drops of the Silver King's chariot. But neither the Goat Girl nor the Royal Ox had ever heard of a scenic railway, much less ridden in one, and the underground car of the Silver Monarch was more like a chute the chutes than anything else. Sometimes the two travellers were in complete darkness, at other times they whirled by the narrow, well-lighted ledges of a queer cave city, where the subjects of the Mountain King lived in cell-like apertures in the silver rock like the cliff dwellers of old. Then without warning the car would plunge to the work caverns below, past the gloomy shafts of the silver mines, or dart up to the living quarters and grottos of the King himself, caves so lavishly furnished and glowing with jewels, Handy let out little shrieks of astonishment. In the King's subterranean gardens, silver swallows bathed in the silver fountains, silver maples rustled their lacy branches in the lavender-scented breezes, silver-petalled flowers with jeweled centers grew as riotously as daisies and buttercups in the upstairs world.



The mountaineers themselves, working listless with pick and shovel in the mines, or walking soberly along the ledges beside their little cliff dwellings, seemed undersized and unhappy to the Goat Girl. Not that she caught more than a flying glimpse of them as the silver car tore by. In fact, she was so frantically busy holding on to the front rail of the car with all her various hands and catching her breath after each dizzy swoop, that her mind was in a perfect whirl. The groans and snorts of Nox were far from reassuring, but afraid to look back

lest she herself be flung out, Handy clung desperately to the rail wondering when the wild ride would end and where under the mountain the silver car was taking them. The last words of Nifflepok rang unpleasantly in her ears and as they raced by a cave marked "Potters Den" the Goat Girl positively shuddered. Here, set out in vast silver pots and buried to their chins in the silver earth, were scores of the King's pale-faced prisoners. A grim-looking gardener was watering them from a milk can, and from the hungry way they lapped up the few drops that fell to them, Handy concluded that this was probably their only food.

"First I shot over a mountain, and now I'm shooting through one!" moaned the distracted Goat Girl, trying to collect her spinning thoughts and faculties. "Oh, my—y, we're going to pot for sure. Oh, this time we are really done for!"



Then all at once Handy's good common sense began to assert itself. And as their strange chariot with a sudden increase of speed and power again dashed down into the darkness, she snatched the precious blue flower from her pocket and at the exact moment the silver car turned over and flung them into space, Handy began pulling the petals from the flower and letting them drift down ahead of her own rapidly falling body. It was just light enough for her to see Nox, with bristling horns and quivering nostrils, fall past, when she herself started to turn so many and such dizzy somersaults she lost all count of time and distance.

Chapter 12: Prisoners of the Wizard

What seemed to be hours later, though in reality it was only a few moments, the two luckless prisoners found themselves side by side on a heap of soft blue flower petals. They were in a small circular pit with one amethyst burning dimly in the grating that covered the top. The Goat Girl had no recollection of her final landing and gazing up at the griled ceiling wondered dully how they had come through without being cut to pieces.



"It tilted," wheezed the Royal Ox, answering the unspoken question in Handy's eyes, "just tilted and slid us down. A fortunate thing you kept that magic flower, m'lass. Ha—rumph!" Weakly and still trembling in every limb, Nox tried to rise, but his legs gave way beneath him and for a good fifteen minutes he and the Goat Girl rested on the flower petals saying never a word. The tapping of

footsteps in the corridor brought Handy quickly to her feet and as Nox managed to heave himself upright, the blue petals vanished, leaving only a tiny flower on the floor. Handy had just time to stuff it into her pocket when an invisible door in the side of the pit opened and twelve depressed workmen in silver cloth caps and overalls stepped inside. They carried brooms, mops and dust pans and stood staring in dismay at the seven-armed Goat Girl and angry-looking Ox.

"We—we were sent to brush up!" stuttered the first workman, touching his cap uneasily. "But—there—seems—"

"To be nothing to brush!" finished Handy sarcastically. "Sorry to disappoint you. Now get OUT!" ordered the Goat Girl furiously, and seizing buckets, brooms and mops from their nerveless fingers, Handy pummeled them left and right with her seven hands.

"Get out and don't come back till Christmas," she panted, as the workmen, tumbling over one another, clawed open the door and banged it to behind them. The knob was on the other side of the pit and not even the edges of the door were now visible.

"What a place!" groaned Handy Mandy, leaning dejectedly against the side of their prison. "What a King! And he looked so nice!" grieved the Goat Girl, sliding down to a sitting position and holding her head in all of her hands.



"Never mind," said the Ox, settling on the floor beside her. "He hasn't gotten the best of us yet. It was pretty clever of you to remember that flower, but what I can't understand, is why you did not tell him at once that we did have this silver hammer he is so anxious to possess? Then we could have traded the hammer for the release of Kerry."

"I don't trust him," answered the Goat Girl somberly. "Why I wouldn't trust that Wizard as far as a goat can butt. Didn't you hear him say the hammer was the second most important magic in Oz? Didn't you hear him say he was stealing and planning to steal the best magic from all the four Kingdoms to make himself supreme ruler of Oz? Well, now that Five has brought him this jug-a-rug or whatever it is and Ozma's own magic picture he's probably well on the way to realizing his ambitions. But he's not going to get our silver hammer. I found it, and I'm going to keep it, for it's far safer with me than with him. Do you suppose we're going to help an old Bozzywog like that? What good would it do to put Kerry back on his throne if Wutz is to be Ruler of Oz? He'd probably pot all the

Kings and keep everything for himself."

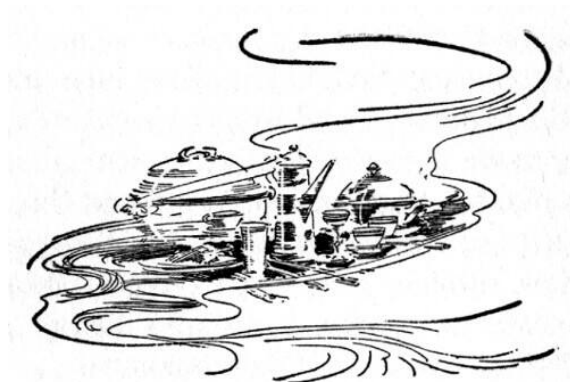
"Very probably," agreed Nox, wagging his head mournfully. "But what are we to do? Are we an army to fight a mountain full of silver moles and minions, are we magicians to risk our necks with this wizard? Besides," Nox's face grew thin and anxious, "if Wutz has treated Kerry the way he has treated us, the boy needs us right now and this very minute."

"But didn't you hear him say he'd put Kerry back on the throne if Nine did not soon find the hammer?" put in Handy patiently. "That proves the little King is still here, and safe. Of course we must find him and get him out of this miserable mountain, but we're not going to give Wutz our hammer or any help at all, and he can put that in his silver pipe and blow bubbles till he bursts," said Handy vindictively. "Now the thing to do is to rest and eat, and then set ourselves to find the way out of this pit and this mountain. Wutz and Nifflepok think we're all swept away by this time. Besides, they'll be too busy talking with Five to bother us. So first to eat and then to think!" proposed Handy in a businesslike manner.

"Perhaps you're right," sighed the Ox, "but I'll not have an easy moment till we're out of this magic mountain. That ride!" Nox lashed his tail and rolled his eyes at the mere thought of their dash down the underground railway. "Did you ever experience anything like it in your life?"

"Well," grinned Handy, "it's one way of seeing the country, I suppose. But let's not look back, old Toggins, let's look ahead. Remember we still have the Dwarf of the Hammer on our side and when we are ready to leave he'll surely show us the way."

"Not before I put a few gores in that Wizard's pants and plans," rumbled Nox belligerently. "I'll teach him to take liberties with the Royal Ox of Keretaria."



"Hi—yigh! That's the old Oz spirit!" cheered Handy, reaching out to touch his golden horn. "Horn, dear, just serve two dinners, and no fooling." Unscrewing Nox's horn of plenty as she spoke, the Goat Girl held it quietly in her wooden hand. And there was certainly no fooling about the two splendid dinners the horn delivered in answer to Handy's wish. Never had she eaten a more appetizing

repast and half of the prison pit was taken up by the fresh hay, fruit and grains brought to satisfy the hunger of the Royal Ox. So, forgetting for a time their awful danger and their disagreeable imprisonment, the two adventurers refreshed themselves, and after the dishes and containers had disappeared, settled down to evolve some plan to outwit the Wizard of Wutz.

Chapter 13: In the Emerald City of Oz

Ten days before the Goat Girl left Mt. Mern, a weary and footsore pilgrim arrived in the Emerald City. At least, he gave that impression to all who saw him shuffling with his long staff and beggar's cup along the shining streets of the capital. The man's head was clean shaven and his small cap, coarse belted robe and sandals marked him as a monk of some old and ancient order. He nodded gently to each person he passed, and seemed, in spite of his many years and wrinkles, innocent and harmless as a child. The splendor and magnificence of the capital astonished and bewildered the old gentleman and in a sort of stupefied disbelief he stared at the emerald studded streets and houses, and gazed up at the lofty peaks and spires of the royal palace. And this was not strange, for of all the fairy cities out of the world, the Emerald City of Oz is the most dazzling and beautiful. But its citizens are kindly and simple, for all that, and many stopped to drop emeralds in the pilgrim's cup and ask him if there was anything else that he needed. To all he mumbled in a strange and indistinguishable tongue and seeing that he was bound for the palace, and sure that Ozma herself would know best how to deal with him, the Emerald City-ites let him go his way unmolested.



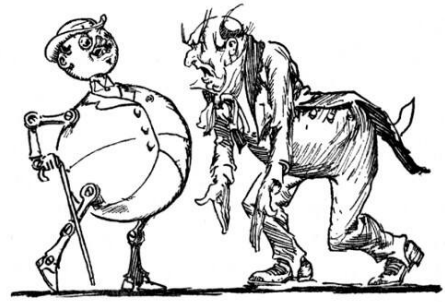
The afternoon was warm and pleasant, and Ozma and some of her favorites were having a lazy game of croquet in the royal garden. The click of the gold mallets as they tapped the gold balls presently attracted the attention of the old wayfarer, who paused to peer curiously over the hedge. The simple summer dresses of the girls in the garden seemed out of all keeping with their majestic surroundings. Except for Ozma's frock, which was longer, the emerald crown on her dark curls, and the golden circlets worn by her three companions, they might

have been any four little girls playing croquet in a garden. But all around were the unmistakable signs of rank and royalty. At ease under a lime tree stood a tall soldier with green whiskers leaning on his gun. Three footmen in satin uniforms stood stiffly beside an emerald topped tea table, ready at a moment's notice to serve Ozade and frosted cake. On a gold bench nearby, a straw stuffed scarecrow was quietly reading the paper, and walking arm in arm down a little path talking composedly together were an energetic little man with a bald head and a curious fellow who seemed to be constructed entirely of copper. To all who are familiar with the quaint and merry folk at Ozma's court, there would be nothing odd about a live scarecrow or a mechanical man, and most of us would have recognized Ozma's companions at once as Dorothy, Betsy and Trot, three mortal girls who long ago came to live in the royal palace.

It was Dorothy who had discovered the Scarecrow on her first visit to Oz, lifting him down from his pole and traveling in his gay and carefree company all the way to the Emerald City. In those days the Wizard of Oz had been ruler of the country, he himself having flown in a balloon from Omaha. Astonished by the circus tricks of this little fellow, the Ozians believing him to be a real wizard, made him their sovereign, and under his wise rule and direction, built the now famous City of Emeralds. The sight of Dorothy had made the humbug wizard homesick, and after presenting the Scarecrow with a fine set of brains, he flew off to America in a balloon of his own construction, leaving the straw man to rule in his place. Afterward, when Ozma was disenchanted and proved to be the rightful ruler of Oz, the Scarecrow had cheerfully resigned. But he still spends most of his time in the palace and is one of Ozma's most trusted friends and counselors. Later the Wizard himself returned to Oz and this time took up the study of magic with such zeal and earnestness he was soon famous from one end of the country to the other. This made him exceedingly valuable to the young fairy ruler, and he, like the Scarecrow, is an old and honored member of Ozma's cabinet.

It was the Wizard who was now talking so earnestly to Tik Tok. The Metal Man was another of Dorothy's discoveries. She met Tik Tok on her second visit to Oz and brought him to the Emerald City for safe keeping. Tik Tok, made by the firm of Smith and Tinker, is a completely mechanical man and a loyal and dependable citizen when he is properly wound up and oiled. Betsy and Trot, like Dorothy, arrived more or less by wind, wave and accident in the Land of Oz. They liked it so well and proved so gay and amusing, Ozma begged them to stay with her and Dorothy in the green castle and help rule the many merry Kingdoms that make up her wonderful empire. This they were only too happy to do, so here they are, Princesses in their own right and living in the most gorgeous City out of the world.

Besides the celebrities in the garden, there are numerous other important people at Ozma's court. For instance, there is Herby, the Medicine Man, whose chest is really a medicine chest full of pills, cures and ointments. Then there is Scraps, a lively girl made from a patchwork quilt by a wizard's wife, and brought to life by the wizard; and there's Pigasus, a flying pig. There's a doubtful dromedary, a cowardly lion, a hungry tiger, and Dorothy's little dog Toto; a glass cat belonging to Scraps, a wooden saw horse belonging to Ozma, an Iffin whom Jack Pumpkinhead discovered near the Land of Barons, and a dozen more unique and unusual characters.



The old pilgrim seemed to find the group in the garden surprising enough, for he watched them closely and silently for almost ten minutes, cupping his hand behind his ear in an endeavor to catch what the Wizard was saying.

"It is just as I have told you," the little Wizard was remarking earnestly to Tik Tok. "The great record book of Glinda has vanished from her castle without trace or reason and even with my powerful searchlight and looking glasses I have been unable to discover any signs of it. Word of the theft came yesterday by pigeon post."

"Some-one has sto-len it for no good pur-pose," answered the Metal Man solemnly. But the old man leaning over the hedge heard none of this, for the two were conversing in low and guarded tones. So after a long puzzled look at the Scarecrow the pilgrim took up his staff and shuffled along the gold pebbled path to the palace itself. A pompous footman in gold and green came to answer his timid knock at the door.

"What name, please, what business, and why in the wood does a fellow like you come begging at the door of a castle?" inquired the footman in a loud displeased voice.

"There, there, Puffup," admonished a rosy-cheeked maid in a ribboned cap and apron, peering around the wide shoulders of the footman. "Don't be so shouting proud. You've frightened the old gentleman half out of his wits. Can't you see he is tired and hungry and probably in need of a lunch?" At the little maid's kind speech, the pilgrim bowed at least a dozen times, nodding his head energetically to show that she was perfectly right in her conjecture. "Come along with you," urged Jellia Jamb, giving him a friendly wink.

Edging nervously past the muttering footman, the old beggar followed Jellia into the castle's spacious and splendid dining hall. "Wait right here and I'll bring you some cake and apple sauce, an omelette and a pot of tea," promised the obliging girl. "How will that be?" Jellia Jamb, who was Ozma's own personal maid and a privileged character around the castle, grinned cheerfully at her ancient visitor, and though the old monk pretended not to understand a word that she said, he nevertheless seated himself at the table and with round eyes watched her skip through the swinging door into the pantry.



No sooner had Jellia disappeared, than the old rascal sprang nimbly to his feet and began to peer eagerly all around him. Passing hurriedly over a rich gold service on the sideboard, he pounced upon an earthen jug on a crystal stand and tucking it under his robe, slipped silently as a shadow out of the dining hall, up the green carpeted stairs and straight into the private sitting room of Ozma of Oz. Once there, and without losing a moment, he walked to the west wall, took down a large gold framed picture, blew upon it with a small glass tube, till it was no larger than a cake of chocolate—and thrust it into an inner pocket. Then, holding his robe high above his skinny shins and with the jug clasped tightly in his arms, he galloped down the stairs and out an open window into the garden, reaching a large clump of snowball bushes without encountering anyone. Hiding himself well in the bushes, he tore off the monk's robe, turned it inside out, dragged a white wig from his sock and presently emerged as dignified and plausible an old grandmother as any one would wish to see. The other side of his monk's robe was green and made up in a style much affected by old ladies in the capital, so that now he attracted no attention whatever. The jug in a large string bag dangled carelessly from his wrist, and smiling and nodding amiably he hurried through the garden, passed rapidly down one street and another, through the high city gates, on and on, till he was far out in the country walking faster and faster and less like a monk or an old lady at every step.



Chapter 14: The Robbery Is Discovered!

"Prunes and peppermints!" ejaculated the Scarecrow, springing up from his bench as Jellia Jamb, with streaming eyes and cap ribbons, came flying across the garden.

"Peanuts and pretzels!" Dorothy, about to hit the pole and win the game, dropped her mallet at Jellia's fire siren screeches, while Ozma and the others swung round in amazement as the little waiting maid, sobbing and panting, rushed into their midst.

"Oh, that beggar! Oh, that pilgrim! That old Monk, or whatever he was!" wailed Jellia, wiping her eyes on the corner of her apron. "He's gone and stolen the jug, I mean Rug, and Oz knows what will become of us!"

"There, there, my girl. Stop crying! Begin at the beginning and tell us just what happened," begged the Scarecrow, patting Jellia clumsily on the shoulder.

"But this is serious, very serious," muttered the Wizard, who had at once realized the importance of the little maid's news. "If Ruggedo is released from that jug and enchantment, he'll be up to his old tricks in no time and doing anything in his power to hurt and destroy us."

"But who could have known we turned Ruggedo into a jug, or where the jug was kept? And why would anyone steal an old earthenware pitcher when there are so many other rare and beautiful objects in the palace?" Ozma, looking anxious and troubled, seated herself on the bench beside the Scarecrow.

"The same person who knew the value of Glinda's record book and stole that," answered the Wizard gloomily. "Dark forces are at work in Oz, my dear, dark forces. Just how did this rascal look, Jellia?"

"Like an old monk with a beggar's cup," said the little maid with a sorrowful sniff. "He seemed so poor and hungry I went off to get him something to eat and no sooner was my back turned than he grabbed the jug and ran off—though he shuffled slowly enough when he came into the palace."



"Disguised, of course," observed the Scarecrow, raising one eyebrow, "and no more a monk than I am. But what was he monkeying round here for? And what could he want with that jug, even if he knew it was the old Gnome King? Really, you know, you shouldn't let perfect strangers into the palace, Jellia."

"Just what I was telling her," wheezed Puffup, breathlessly adding himself to the group on the lawn, "and I hopes this will be a lesson to you, Miss."

"If we just knew where the old villain came from," worried the Wizard, tapping his fingers absently on Tik Tok's copper arm.

"Or where he was going," finished Dorothy, pushing back her crown.

"Why not look in the ma-gic pic-ture?" proposed the Machine Man calmly. "The pic-ture would show us where he is now."

"Of course it would!" Ozma rewarded Tik Tok with a bright smile, and jumping up, the little Fairy hurried across the garden and into the palace with the others just a few steps behind her. But when they reached the small sitting room where the magic picture was hung, of course it was not there, and now in real distress and consternation they all sat down to discuss the mysterious forces working against them.

"I thought Ruggedo was the only enemy I had left," sighed Ozma, leaning wearily back in her satin tufted arm chair. "I thought when we turned the Gnome King to a jug, all our troubles would be over."

"Who-ev-er stole the jug knows that Rug-ge-do was once the pow-er-ful me-tal mon-arch who tried a-gain and a-gain to con-quer Oz," rasped Tik Tok in his slow and precise fashion.

"Right!" agreed the Wizard, striding up and down with his hands clasped behind his back. "And whoever stole that jug and the magic picture plans to disenchant the Gnome King and learn from him the best way to destroy us. But that will be pretty difficult," asserted the little Wizard, thrusting out his chin. "That transformation was one of the best you ever made, my dear Ozma, one of the best. It will take a pretty smart wizard to turn that jug back to Rug again."



"Whoever stole the jug and Ozma's magic picture WAS pretty smart," Betsy Bobbin reminded him seriously. "And without the picture how're we going to find out who it is? Can't you do something, Wiz dear, or do we just have to sit around and wait to be conquered?"

"I shall go to my laboratory at once," decided the Wizard importantly, "and there by some magic means I'll try to discover who is at the bottom of all this wretched plotting and thievery. Lock up the magic treasures in your safe, Ozma, especially the Gnome King's magic belt, and have them guarded day and night." Briskly the little Wizard rushed out of the room, returning in a moment to repeat gloomily, "DAY and NIGHT!"

"And I'll go and drill the army," declared the Scarecrow, stepping recklessly out an open French window and falling flat, but undaunted, in a flower bed below.

"And I'd better call Tige and the Cowardly Lion," said Dorothy, who had always found the lion a splendid fighter in spite of his cowardice, and the Hungry Tiger, ready at the drop of a handkerchief to protect his royal patrons with tooth and claw. "They can sit right here beside the safe and I'd just like to see anyone get by them!"

"Maybe it will be someone they cannot see," shivered Betsy, peering out into the darkening garden.

"Oh, my, isn't it too exciting!" Trot, bouncing up and down on a small sofa, leaned over to touch Ozma on the knee. "It reminds me of the time Ugu the Shoemaker stole all the magic treasures in Oz. Remember?"



Ozma, looking at the space where her magic picture had hung, nodded her head sorrowfully, saddened and sobered by the thought that she still had dangerous and unscrupulous enemies in Oz.

Chapter 15: The Pilgrim Returns to the Mountain

Travelling northward by foot and as quickly as he could, Number Five had come to the Silver King's Mountain just a few moments after Nox and Handy Mandy. Now, dressed in the silver armor and helmet worn by all the Wizard's M-Men, he waited in great agitation for the wizard to appear. Nifflepok had at once taken Five to the den where Wutz carried on all his magic experiments and kept his valuable treasures, and quite sure none of the other agents had been as successful as he, Five paced impatiently up and down, fancying himself already co-ruler with the wizard in Oz.



"So, there you are at last!" Entering from an invisible door in the back of his work shop, Wutz stared coldly at Five. "Well, what trash is that you have stolen?" was asked, finally. The wizard always pretended the discoveries of his agents were of little use and importance. And when Five, completely taken aback and crestfallen, began to explain the wonderful properties of the magic picture and the fact that the old jug had once been the powerful King of the Gnomes, the Silver Monarch cut him short. "Yes, yes, but just see what Seven has brought," he told him gloatingly. "Seven, by a trick known only to himself, has stolen and transported to our mountain the great record book of Glinda the Good Sorceress!" Following the direction of the King's imperious finger, Five gazed jealously at a huge volume chained with golden chains to its marble stand. "In that book," went on the wizard quickly, "everything that ever happened in Oz is recorded, not only everything that has happened, but everything that is happening. You can see the entries appearing at this very minute on the open page."

"I see, I see!" Five scarcely glanced at the record book. "But this magic picture shows you any person you desire to look at. With this picture and the help of the powerful Gnome King, now disguised as a jug, we can soon make ourselves rulers of Oz. All we need to do is release Ruggedo from his enchantment. I have been told by people in the Emerald City that Ruggedo is familiar with all the magic secrets of Ozma and the Wizard of Oz, and is, besides, a skilful magician himself. Once we have disenchanted him, everything will be easy."



"We? We?" sneered Wutz, who secretly agreed with Five, but would not give him the satisfaction of knowing it. "Well, put the picture there on that stand so I can examine it. Show us this silly ruler of Oz who sets herself above all other rulers," he ordered sharply. "Where is she now and what is she doing?" Then, though the wizard and Five and Nifflepok, who had come noiselessly into the workshop, gazed into the canvas till their eyes stung and watered, not a single figure appeared to enlighten them. "HAH! A hoax!" raged the Silver King, rushing at Five and shaking him till his armor rattled. "How dare you fool me in this dangerous manner?"

"But it's not a hoax," screamed Five as soon as he could speak. "It worked perfectly well in the castle."

"Perhaps it was hurt when you reduced it to carry it here," put in Nifflepok nervously. He was always trying to keep peace between the cruel King and his subjects. "Perhaps it only obeys the commands of Ozma, its rightful owner. And remember, you still have the jug and the magic record book. The record book might even explain about the picture," he suggested hopefully. "I thought so, it says here: 'The magic picture and Rug, the jug, have been stolen from the castle of Ozma of Oz by an agent of the Silver King.'"

"There!" exclaimed Five, brushing himself off indignantly. "I told you it was the one and only picture."

"Yes, but what good is it to me if it doesn't work?" scoffed the wizard. "I'll not have you potted this time, Five, but next time don't bring me damaged goods and old jugs, bring something of real value." As Five, red faced and furious, jerked himself out of the King's presence, Wutz turned joyfully to Nifflepok. "Getting on, old Tubbykins, we're getting on! Without that magic picture Ozma will not be able to trace her stolen property, and without the record book, Glinda will not be able to help her. So who's to stop us from stealing everything? Everything!" exulted Wutz, picking up the earthen jug and waving it over his head.



"But do you think it wise to treat our agents so shabbily?" sighed Nifflepok. "They might betray us, you know."

"Oh, no, they won't," sniffed the wizard, grinning broadly at his anxious little assistant. "The way I treat them is perfectly all right, keeps them on their toes,

and with each trying to outdo the other we get the best results."

"Well, I hope you're right," Nifflepok still looked unconvinced. "But I cannot help thinking—"

"Out of your line, Niffy; just leave the thinking to me. Now fetch me my magic blower, there's a good fellow, till I see what can be done with this jug. It may take some time and doing to release this ugly little gnome. By the way, did you pulverize those meddling Munchkins?"

"Oh, yes!" Nifflepok nodded his head with a little shudder of distaste. "I shot them down into the prisoner's pit just as your Majesty commanded."

"That's strange." The wizard in crossing the den to fetch a glass test tube had paused for a moment beside the book of records. "It says here, 'The Goat Girl from Mern and the Royal Ox are in the Silver King's Mountain planning to release the little King of Keretaria.' So that's what brought them here?" mused the wizard softly. "Now, then, Nifflepok, something must have slipped up instead of down. If your prisoners were powdered or pulverized, how could they be planning and plotting?"

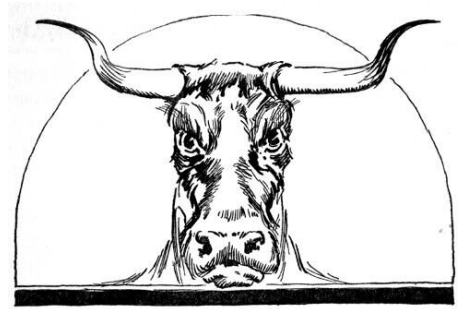
"They must have some powerful magic to help them," muttered Nifflepok, "or how could they have survived that fall?"

"Better find out, my dear fellow. Go spy on those Munchkins, and if their magic is important or worth while, come back and tell me. And in the future be more careful how you carry out my orders and instructions!" The wizard's voice was still low and pleasant, but his eyes flashed so threateningly, Nifflepok rushed out of the royal work den, flung himself in the silver car and went speeding down to the prison pits at the bottom of the mountain.



Chapter 16: The Wizard's Bargain!

While Nifflepok had been interviewing Five, Handy and Nox had been having a troublesome conference of their own. Each plan they devised for finding the little King and escaping from the Silver King's Mountain proved impractical. To summon the hammer elf to release them from the prison pit would probably rouse the underground guards and minions of the wizard, and give Wutz himself an opportunity to steal the hammer. To tap the hammer lightly and ask the advice of Himself had next seemed a good idea, but as Nox quickly pointed out, that, too, was dangerous.



"In a wizard's den like this, anything can happen," groaned the Ox, looking around with a gloomy eye. "How do we know we are not being watched at this very moment? If you so much as show that hammer, somebody may pounce in here and snatch it away, which will leave us with nothing to protect ourselves with in a last emergency—except that blue flower, my horns and your hands."

Handy did not like the sound of "last emergency," but even Handy realized they would not escape from the mountain without some sort of battle. To the free and sun-loving mountain girl every minute underground was sheer torture. She longed for a breath of the pure upper air, and the unreal light and pale faces of Wutz's underground citizens and workers filled her with pity and loathing. "Of course, no matter how long they leave us here, your horn of plenty will keep us from starving, but if we don't soon find some way out, I believe I'll explode!" she choked in a desperate voice.

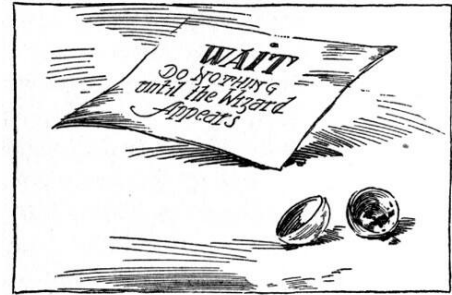
"Let's look at the message in that silver ball again," suggested Nox unexpectedly. "Are you sure you read it all, m'lass? There might have been directions on the other side."

"I don't think so," said Handy, shaking her head. Then, because action of any sort was a relief, she deftly twisted off Nox's left horn and tilted the silver balls into one of her always handy palms. The first ball when she opened it contained nothing further than the silver key. In the center of the second lay the same folded paper, but this time when Handy unfolded the paper there was a new message inside.

"Wait!" cautioned the little slip of paper in small blue letters. "Do nothing until the wizard appears."

"Oh," breathed the Royal Ox, touching the paper gently with his nose. "Someone is helping us."

"Then I'd better keep this silver ball in my pocket," decided the Goat Girl, "where I can easily get it. In a tight corner I might not have a chance to unscrew your horn. Dear—ear, how puzzling it all grows! So we're to hear from the wizard again. Whist! What was that?" As Handy, with her wooden hand, slipped the first ball back into the horn, with her leather hand screwed the horn back on Nox's head and with one of her best white hands stuffed the second ball and message into her pocket, they heard agitated footsteps pattering along the outside corridor. After a tense moment, however, they died away, and exchanging a relieved glance, Nox and Handy settled down to wait for the wizard.



The footsteps, as you have already guessed, belonged to Nifflepok. Peering in at them through an invisible window, the King's messenger had been just in time to see Handy shaking the silver balls from the golden horn. Without waiting to see what use they would make of this curious magic, Nifflepok rushed back to inform his master.

"They are wizards!" he panted, bursting unceremoniously into the Silver King's den. "The magic is in the ox's horn. With my own eyes I saw the seven-armed maiden shaking silver balls from his horn."



"What do I care about silver balls?" snarled Wutz, who was in a terrible temper. "If I had them here I'd bounce you over the head with them." The den was full of sulphurous smoke, but the earthenware jug still stood unchanged on the table before him. "The magic in the Emerald City is still better than mine," hissed the Silver Monarch, his voice quivering with anger and disappointment. "I've tried every single formula in my book of incantations, every straight and crooked pass in the magician's manual, every powder and potion on my shelves, and this ugly jug is still a jug and nothing but a jug! What are we going to do?" he yelled furiously. "Think of something, you noddle-headed pig! I must have the help of this little Gnome King, but how'm I going to get him out of the jug?"

"Perhaps, with a little more time," faltered Nifflepok, twisting his high hat nervously in his hands.

"Time! TIME!" exploded the wizard. "When did time ever break an enchantment?" Snatching up a pair of silver pliers he flung them wrathfully at his

assistant. Nifflepok, fortunately for his head, caught the dangerous missile in his hat, and darting behind a tall cabinet, looked pleadingly out at his unreasonable Master. "Wait! Wait!" he begged earnestly as Wutz with a menacing frown took up his silver bubble pipe. "I HAVE thought of something. Make these Munchkins break the Gnome King's enchantment. They have passed all the hazards of our mountain unharmed. Undoubtedly the girl is a sorceress and the Ox a powerful magician in disguise. Let them do this trifling service for your Majesty in return for the useless captive we are holding for Number Nine."

"Hm—mmmm!" Deliberately the Silver Monarch put down his pipe. "That's not a bad idea, Niffle, not a bad idea at all." Picking up the jug, Wutz brushed rudely by his trembling little Minister and hurried out of his workshop. A few minutes later, he stood bowing and smiling before the two travelers in the prisoner's pit. But warned by the message in the silver ball, his entrance through the invisible door neither frightened nor impressed Handy Mandy or the Royal Ox.



"So here you are at last," exclaimed the Goat Girl, looking the Silver Monarch sternly in the eye. "And about time, too. How dare you imprison us in this miserable pit for no reason at all?"

"Oh, yes, there is a reason," stated Wutz a little surprised at Handy's defiance. "You broke into my mountain without invitation or permission and as you are nothing but a pair of trespassers, you certainly deserve imprisonment and even destruction."

"Nonsense," snorted the Royal Ox, lurching forward heavily. "We came here seeking a lost boy whom you are unlawfully holding captive. As soon as you release the little King of Keretaria, we will take him and leave this mountain!"

"And the sooner you tell us where he is, the better!" added Handy, snapping her thirty-five fingers under the Silver King's nose.

"Ah, you think so?" sneered Wutz. "Well, nothing is ever given for nothing in this mountain, but I may give you a chance to earn the boy's release. Here in my hand is a jug, an ordinary enough looking jug. With the magic you have in your possession, you must transform this jug to its proper shape. If you succeed, you and the Ox and the Boy King of Keretaria may leave my mountain unharmed. If you fail, ha ha!" The heartless wizard threw back his head and laughed uproariously. "If you fail, the walls of this pit will contract until you are—well, shall we say—obliterated? To keep your part of the bargain and perform this slight service I will give you one half hour. Here is the jug, and in case you fail,

GOOD-BYE!"

"Good Gillikins!" whistled Nox, as the wizard strode through the invisible door and left them alone. "What does that fool think we are, wizards—magicians—necromancers?" Groaning and snorting, he began to gallop round and round the hot little pit.



"Look out! Look out! You'll break the jug," warned Handy, snatching it up in her arms. "And for goat's sake stop that galloping! I'm dizzy enough as it is."

"But you heard what he said?" lowed the Ox, coming to a trembling stop beside her. "What are we to do? We know nothing of magic or magic transformations!" In their distress and excitement, they both forgot there might be a message to help them in the silver ball, and Handy, taking the jug in one of her white hands, surveyed it with horror and curiosity.

"It's so old and ugly now," said the Goat Girl slowly, "I'll bet it was something old and ugly to begin with. Didn't Nifflepok mention something about a jug that was a rug? Maybe it's a rug, though more likely a rogue. Say, I wonder if I broke the jug whether that would not break the enchantment?"

"Oh, no, no, no! Don't do that!" begged Nox, rolling his eyes in terror. "If you break the jug, the wizard will be furious, and how do you know what will break the spell? Here, let me look at it." Passing the jug rapidly from one hand to another, Handy started to place it on the floor under Nox's nose with her seventh and last hand, when a sudden and unexpected scream from the interior, made her drop it with a loud crash to the silver stones.

"Ouch! Oh, stop! How dare you bang me around in this hateful manner?" Up from the flying fragments of earthenware at Handy's feet sprang a fierce little gnome with a long ragged beard, shaking his fists and howling like a child.

"Oh, my—y! I've actually done it!" quavered the Goat Girl, falling over against Nox. "Look! Look! Didn't I tell you it would be old and ugly?" The gnome, at Handy's words suddenly stopped howling.

"Where am I? Where am I? WHO am I?" he mumbled in a frightened voice.

"Well, I don't know who you are, but I'm afraid you're in a pretty bad place," said Handy, straightening up to have a better look at her handiwork. "You're in the underground caverns of the King of the Silver Mountain, if you must know."

"Caverns!" beamed the gnome, his face breaking into a wide smile. "What's the

matter with caverns? I LOVE caverns, why I used to live in one myself. And who did you say I was?"

"We don't know who you are," explained Nox, in a cautious voice. "A moment ago and before Handy took you in hand, you were nothing but a jug."

"A jug?" pondered the gnome pulling his beard thoughtfully. "You mean to say I was a JUG?"

"Maybe 'Was-a-jug's' your name," volunteered the Goat Girl, now quite interested in her transformation.

"No, not 'Was-a-jug' but something like a jug. Let me think—Bug, hug, chug, mug, pug, rug-RUG? That's it, THAT'S my name, Ruggedo!" shrieked the little gnome joyfully, "and now I know who I am!"

"Well, who are you?" inquired the Ox, stretching his royal nose down toward the whirling gnome.

"I, why, I am the most important King on the other side of the desert!" shouted Ruggedo exultantly. "I am the one and only Metal Monarch and Ruler of all the Gnomes! My caves and caverns under the mountains of Ev sparkle with jewels and precious stones, mined by my faithful workers, and my grand army of gnomes outnumbers any army in OZ." Proudly the ragged little King thumped himself upon the chest.



"Oh, my! Oh, me! Oh, mercy—ercy! If you're as powerful as all that, maybe you'll help us!" cried the Goat Girl, clasping her hands eagerly.

"Help you? Why should I help you?" The little Gnome stared scornfully at the two occupants of the cave.

"Because she broke your jug and enchantment, you ungrateful little wretch!" snorted Nox, lowering his horns. "And you don't look like a king to me, you just look like a plain ordinary wicked little ragamuffin, a RUGAMUFFIN!" he bellowed angrily.

Chapter 17: Out of the Prison Pit

Nox's angry words had a strange effect on the boastful Gnome King. Leaning dejectedly against the side of the pit, he drew his hand wearily across his

forehead.

"I remember now," he told them hoarsely. "I once was the Powerful Metal Monarch, but that was before I fell into the hands of Ozma and that wicked Wizard of Oz."

"So it was Ozma who turned you to a jug!" exclaimed Handy with all her hands on her hips.



"Yes, and before that she deprived me of my Kingdom, ducked me in a Truth Pond, marooned me for years on a desert island, struck me dumb, and then, when she could think of nothing worse, turned me to this jug!" screamed Ruggedo, kicking at the fragments of broken china at his feet.

"You and Ozma have been enemies for a long time, then?" observed the Ox, looking at the Gnome with great disfavor.

"Yes, yes, ever since that girl Dorothy stole my magic belt and gave it to Ozma," raged Ruggedo, stamping furiously up and down. "And every time I try to recover my own property, or capture those wretched girls and the Emerald City, something goes wrong and they conquer ME! The last time Ozma turned me to a jug!" cried Ruggedo, his voice rising to a shrill whistle.

"Well, what did you expect?" inquired Handy Mandy sharply. "That Ozma would sit calmly on her throne and allow you to conquer her? My—y such goings on!"

"Oh, then you are friends of Ozma?" said the Gnome King suspiciously. "But no, you could not be her friends or you would not have broken the jug. Who ARE you? The Ox is usual enough, except for his golden horns, but you"—Ruggedo's eyes grew round and anxious as he looked at the seven-armed Goat Girl, "YOU are odd, aren't you?"



"No, she's not odd!" snapped the Royal Ox severely. He had been through so much with the sturdy mountain lass, he felt almost as if they were related. "Handy is just seven times as smart and seven times as handy as most people, that's all. And since her seven hands have served you pretty well, try to keep a civil tongue in your head, will you?"

"Oh, all right!" Ruggedo scuffing his foot, looked sulkily from one to the other. "Much obliged, I'm sure. But what in rockets are we doing in this miserable hole and what are we waiting for?"

"For a fellow Metal Monarch and Wizard," answered a smooth voice, and

appearing as quietly as he had vanished, Wutz stood calmly before them. "Come with me, Ruggedo, I have surprising news for you, comrade!" And without so much as a nod or "thank you" to Nox and Handy Mandy, he linked his arm through the Gnome's and drew him through the invisible door, slamming it viciously behind him.

"Hi—yi!" yelled Handy Mandy indignantly. "Come back here! Come back here! A bargain's a bargain, you old cheat and villain! We've kept our part and you shall keep yours! Where have you hidden the little King of Keretaria? Let us out! Let us out, you false faced rascal!"

Nox, as angry as Handy, charged forward, butting his head against the exact spot where the wizard had disappeared. To his astonishment and joy the whole section of wall swung outward and he and the Goat Girl, rushing through, found themselves in a narrow dimly lit silver tunnel.

"To think, to think we could have got out any time!" gulped the Royal Ox in a vexed voice. "The door was invisible but not locked. Imagine that, m'lass!"

"Oh, I've other things to do," puffed Handy, peering down the long passageway to see whether she could catch a glimpse of the two Kings. "No use trying to imagine anything about this mountain, it's just plain bewitched and goblinish. But that wizard made us a promise and I'm going to see that he keeps it. Come on!"



"No! No!" said the Royal Ox, leaning weakly against the side of the tunnel. "I couldn't bear to look at him again, at least, not just yet. Wait! I may think of something else! WAIT!" bellowed Nox, as Handy, in spite of his pleas, started off on a run. "There now, you've dropped something out of your pocket."

"That silver ball," muttered Handy, scooping it up without slackening her pace.

"The ball! The BALL?" exclaimed Nox, galloping breathlessly to catch up with her. "Oh, what muddle heads, WHAT muddle heads! It told us to wait for the wizard. Quick, see what it says now?"

"Well, a lot of good it did waiting for that wizard," grumbled the Goat Girl; but nevertheless, she stopped and opened the silver ball. Taking out the folded paper, she held it up toward an amethyst gleaming dully in the side of the tunnel.

"Follow me."

directed the paper rather mysteriously.

"But who does 'me' mean?" asked Handy, as Nox, still breathing heavily, read the message over her shoulder. "I don't see any me, do you? Beans and butternuts! If you hadn't stopped me I'd have caught those villains by this time!"

"And what good would that have done?" sniffed the Ox impatiently. "Remember there are two of them now, and that little gnome is worse than Wutz and twice as dangerous." Closing his eyes in an effort to concentrate, Nox repeated over the message, "Follow me! Follow me! Follow ME! Why of course, it's as plain as oats!" he snorted joyfully. "'Me' means that ball. Put the message back in the ball, set the ball down and then see what happens." And what happened, was amazing enough, for the silver ball, once it was on the floor of the tunnel began to roll rapidly along ahead of them, faster and faster and faster, till Handy and Nox had all they could do to keep it in sight.

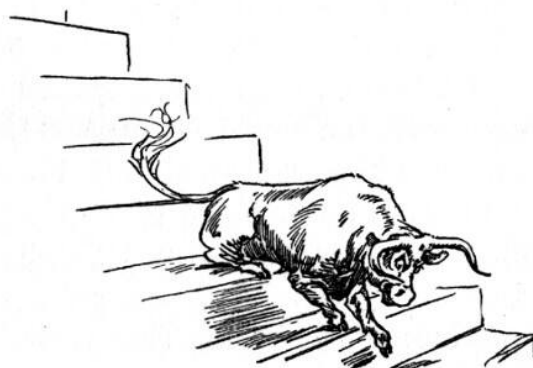
"Where do you suppose it's taking us?" gasped the Goat Girl, thankful that so far the tunnel had been more or less straight and fairly well lighted.

"To Kerry," said the Royal Ox positively. "Now watch that turn, m'lass. What's ahead? It's growing so dark I can't even see my own shadow!"

"It's a flight of steps," whispered Handy, gazing fearfully into the deep well of a circular stairway winding down into the darkness. They could hear the chink of the silver ball as it rolled from step to step, so, taking her courage in all hands, the Goat Girl, herself, began to descend. Nox, grunting and muttering lugubriously, came just behind her. Steps were difficult enough for the Ox at any time, but negotiating a flight of circular steps in pitch darkness was terrifying and dangerous in the extreme.

"Be careful!" warned Handy, looking up anxiously. "Don't slip, or you'll break my heart."

"More than that, I'm afraid," quavered the Royal Ox, setting his front feet cautiously on the step below while he balanced his hind quarters perilously on the one above.



Chapter 18: Wutz and the Gnome King Leave for the Capital!

Meanwhile, Wutz and Ruggedo had shot up in the wizard's silver car and were now in earnest conversation together.

"How in suds did that girl break your enchantment?" asked Wutz, dropping irritably to his silver workbench. "I was watching her every minute through an invisible window and I didn't see her do a thing but break the jug. Now why couldn't I have thought of that?"



"Oh, what does it matter?" Ruggedo settled himself with a joyful little wriggle beside the Silver Monarch. "What does it matter so long as I am free and able to help you? So you really think you can make yourself Ruler of Oz?" he went on, glancing enviously round the wizard's well stocked den, with its tables full of magic apparatus and its shelves and shelves of dusty volumes of wizard and witch works. Wutz had confided his plans and intentions to Ruggedo on the ride up. "Say!" exclaimed the Gnome King suddenly, "How did you get Glinda's record book? That's the most important treasure in her castle!"

"Of course!" Lazily the wizard reached for his silver pipe. "Well, it's a long story, Rug, but I don't mind telling you that I have agents working in every Kingdom of the country. Seven, who was assigned to the Quadling Country, brought in the record book, smallifying it in order to steal and carry it here, and restoring it to proper size when it arrived. Six and Eleven have brought me useful magic from the Winkies and Gillikins, but Five managed to steal Ozma's own magic picture, and ha ha! since he couldn't find the Gnome King's belt, he brought me the Gnome King himself! Pretty clever of him to discover you were a jug, eh?"

"Re-markable!" sighed Ruggedo, as Wutz paused to blow a silver bubble which floated out of the work den, breaking somewhere outside with a tinkling bell-like explosion.

"Two glasses of melted silver," snapped the wizard to a smart looking bell boy who came in answer to this singular summons. "Now," continued Wutz, looking at the Gnome King through half closed eyes, "before I attempt to capture the Emerald City, I must have one of two things; either the silver hammer belonging to a witch of the West or the magic belt that once belonged to you. So far, none of my agents has been able to find the witch, locate the hammer, or discover where Ozma now keeps your magic belt. But you, its rightful owner, must know exactly where it is hidden?"

Ruggedo, without saying anything, nodded briefly.

"Well then," said Wutz, "if you will help me steal the magic belt, which I understand is the most potent and powerful magic in Ev or Oz, I will kick Kaliko off your throne, restore your own Kingdom and give you besides any one of the four Oz Kingdoms you may fancy."

"Oh, don't bother me with any of the Oz Kingdoms. I'm sick of the place!" frowned the Gnome, wagging his beard vindictively. "All I want is my own old Kingdom and my own magic belt! But I tell you what I will do. I'll help you steal this belt, for I know exactly where it is hidden, show you how it works so you can transform Ozma and all her friends and counselors to rocks and rubble. BUT, when you are safely established as supreme Wizard of Oz, you must return the belt to me."

"Oh, naturally!" promised the wizard, chuckling to himself as he thought how quickly he would turn Ruggedo to a rock once he was wearing the famous belt. Taking a glass of melted silver from the tray the boy had just set down, Wutz lifted it to his lips, and Ruggedo, his eyes glittering with all their old spitefulness, raised his own glass to drink to the wicked bargain.

"Come," he sputtered, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand. "When do we start? What magic have you to carry us to the capital and open the emerald safe where the magic belt and other important treasures of Ozma are hidden? But wait, perhaps we had better look in the magic picture and see where Ozma and the Wizard of Oz are now?"



"I am afraid we cannot do that," Wutz explained regretfully. "Seven spoiled the canvas in some way when he reduced it to carry it here. It doesn't show anything now and I've not had time to repair the damage."

"Pshaw, that's too bad," said Ruggedo, going over to touch the picture, now hanging on the wizard's wall. "But the record book's still working, I suppose?"



"Oh, yes," said the wizard, stepping up to the marble table and glancing down at the open page. "And listen to this. It says," roared the Silver King, holding his sides and simply rocking with wicked merriment, "it says: 'The two metal monarchs are plotting the downfall of the present ruler of Oz.'"

"What else does it say?" inquired the Gnome King, who had had more experience than his companion in dealing with the magicians of the Emerald City.

"It says, 'Ozma and her counselors have gone to the castle of Glinda the Good,'" Wutz told him complacently closing and padlocking the big volume.

"Then we'd better start at once and before they return," declared Ruggedo. "For as soon as we have my belt we can change them to rocks, wherever they are. The most important thing is to get that belt before they know we are after it. But how are we going to get to the Emerald City and how're we going to open that safe?"

"My silver blowpipe will reduce the safe to a heap of ashes without injuring the contents," answered the wizard, "and reaching the capital will be the simplest part of all!"

Taking a silver tube from a high shelf, Wutz put it in his pocket and reaching for his bubble pipe, he began to blow an enormous quicksilver bubble round himself and the Gnome King. Slowly and with both Kings inside, the bubble rose, passed in a silver mist out of the wizard's den, up through the honeycomb of caves, caverns and grottos, on up—and up, till it floated right out of the top of the Silver King's Mountain.

Chapter 19: At the Bottom of the Mountain!

At the same moment the silver bubble carrying Wutz and Ruggedo burst out of the top of the mountain, Handy Mandy and Nox reached the bottom, arriving at last at the end of the winding stair. One amethyst burned dimly on the small landing, and crowded uncomfortably together the two prisoners found themselves facing a heavily barred door.

Private Lower of the Wizard of Wutz.
Keep Out!

announced a surly sign. But Handy and Nox, their legs still quivering from the long downward climb, were in no humor to be stopped by a sign.

"Lower!" sniffed Handy Mandy disgustedly. "I should think it was, we must be at the very bottom of this miserable mountain. Lower—indeed! Well, I expect a lower is the opposite of a tower, come on!" Picking up the silver ball, Handy squinted sharply at the door, giving it a quick shove to see whether it was locked or fitted with an invisible moving panel. But there was nothing remarkable about this door, and nothing on it except a very small silver keyhole, which at once recalled to the Goat Girl the key she had been carrying around ever since she left Keretaria.



"Oh, Nox, I believe the key in your horn will fit!" she cried excitedly, and deftly removing the left prong of Nox's headgear she shook out the ball. Then, while Nox fairly panting with impatience looked on, Handy took the key from the ball and inserted it in the silver lock. When it turned easily and smoothly she was almost afraid to open the door. What would they find on the other side? What had the wizard done to his helpless young captive? As Handy hesitated, Nox rushed forward, banging the door open with his great shoulder.



"Kerry! Kerry!" wailed the faithful Ox, and falling to his knees, Nox began to snort and blubber in real earnest. Handy, hurrying after him into the small stuffy cell, saw a handsome boy in hunting costume standing motionless and silent as a statue in the center of a great shimmering violet bubble. Without thinking or reasoning, or even stopping to consult the Ox, the Goat Girl flung out all her arms toward the solitary figure, her iron hand puncturing the bubble with a deafening pop.

"Why, hello Nox!" The Little King stepped calmly out of the misty vapor, all that was left of the wizard's bubble. "Where's your other horn? And who is this jolly

looking girl?"

WHO, indeed? There was so much to be told and explained, even with Handy and Nox talking as fast as they could and taking turns, it took almost an hour to tell the story of their journey from Keretaria to the Silver Mountain and their awful experiences with the Wizard of Wutz.

Kerry himself remembered nothing since he had started out on the hunting expedition. He listened with angry exclamations and bounces as Nox related the tale of King Kerr's treachery and the sad state of affairs in Keretaria. "And I've been shut up in this bubble for two years!" mourned the little King, looking round the dismal cell with a shudder. "Why it makes my head ache just to think of it!"

"Mine, too," agreed Handy, clapping Nox's left horn in place. "But it's almost over now, my lad. If we can just find some way out of this mountain, I'll settle old King Kerr and his High Boys, not to speak of this woozling wizard!"

Placing Kerry on Nox's back, Handy looked nervously out the door of the Lower. At sight of the winding stair Nox gave a great groan and shudder. "I'll never climb those steps again!" he declared, planting his feet stubbornly. "Never! Where's that silver hammer, m'lass? Give it a tap and see what the dwarf can do for us? Wutz and Ruggedo are too busy with their wicked plans to bother us now."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that," muttered the Goat Girl. Nevertheless, she pulled out the hammer and tapped it lightly on the floor.

"Well, what's wanted?" yawned Himself, appearing instantly and in the exact spot the hammer had struck.



"We want to get out of here!" cried Kerry, so excited and delighted with the purple bearded dwarf, he instantly forgot all his troubles. With a crooked smile at the little King, Himself looked questioningly at Handy, and at the Goat Girl's quick nod, rapped his knuckles on the north wall of the Lower. At once, a small panel slipped aside, revealing an elevator, its door invitingly open. Waving all her hands to thank Himself, who was already beginning to disappear, Handy stepped inside. Nox, with Kerry still perched on his back, just managed to

squeeze in, when the door snapped shut and the elevator sped upward carrying its three passengers in double quicksilver time to the work den of the wizard. Handy, a bit disappointed not to find herself on top of the mountain, stepped out first. As Nox, with an awkward jump, followed her, the door slammed sharply and the elevator dropped like a plummet to the bottom of the mountain.

"Oh, this must be where Wutz works all his magic transformations," breathed Kerry, sliding off Nox's back and gazing around with deep interest and curiosity. "I'll bet he blew a bubble round me right in this very den. Wonder where he is now?" There was a slight cough at Kerry's question and turning, they saw Nifflepok standing uncertainly in the doorway.



"Ah, so we meet again!" cried Handy, doubling up all her fists and walking grimly toward the Silver King's fat Minister. "Where is that rascally Master of yours? As you probably know by this time, we kept our part of the bargain, but he still has to keep his."

"Indeed, you are fortunate to have escaped with your lives," muttered Wutz, taking off his hat and looking anxiously inside. "And I'm sorry to tell you the Wizard of Wutz NEVER keeps his bargains. No matter how hard we work or try to please him, sooner or later, we are all shelved or potted!"

"Then why work for such a villain?" snorted the Royal Ox gruffly. "Where is he now?"

"Yes, where is he now?" asked Kerry, who in spite of the terrible stories he had heard, hoped to get a look at the wonderful wizard who had enchanted him.

"Gone!" answer Nifflepok, putting on his high hat and giving it a couple of taps. "He's bubbled off with the Gnome King to conquer Oz, and I expect by this time they've bewitched about half the inhabitants of the Emerald City."

"Oh, what a shame!" burst out Kerry.

"Bubbled off? What do you mean by that?" The Goat Girl reached out with all her arms to pull the Silver King's little Minister closer.

"I mean, bubbled off," repeated Nifflepok, struggling to release himself from Handy's clutches. "He blew a quicksilver bubble and he and Ruggedo sailed away in it, if that's any plainer."

"Oh, then we had better go right after them," snorted the Ox in an anxious voice. "Show us out of this mountain, you little pudding, or I'll toss you higher than a kite."

"Oh, do let's do something!" begged Kerry, who, being young, was quite daring and absolutely foolhardy. "We aren't going to let those dreadful Kings conquer the country, are we, and not lift a hand?"

"Well, I'm sure I'd lift all seven if it would do any good," mused Handy Mandy in a depressed voice. "But how can we stop them? Wutz and Rug have probably stolen all the magic in Ozma's palace by this time, the thieving rascals!"

"But surely YOU have some magic?" ventured Nifflepok, who had finally jerked himself free. "Or you could never have disenchanting that gnome or found the wizard's Lower and rescued this boy; and if you have—" he warned, backing rapidly away, "if you have, you'd better use it QUICK. When Wutz finishes conquering Oz, he's sure to remember you and turn you to rocks and rubble. He's going to turn everyone to rocks and rubble!" wailed Nifflepok, dashing out of the workshop.

"Great Gazoo, what shall we do? I don't want to be a rock," snorted Nox.

"And I won't be a rock!" stormed the little King. "It was bad enough being shut up in a bubble and missing two whole years—oh, you won't let him turn us to rocks, will you, Handy? And do let's help poor Ozma, before it's too late!"



Kerry looked up at her so pleadingly, Handy, against all her inclinations and better judgment, pulled out the silver hammer again. "The hammer will be better than the ball," she reasoned quickly, "for the ball only seems to help Keretarians. Now then!" Lifting the hammer in her iron hand, the Goat Girl brought it down sharply on the wizard's marble table. Silver sparks flew up in every direction and out of the very middle of the shower stepped the yawning dwarf.

"Say, I'm trying to take a nap," grumbled Himself, stretching his arms up sleepily. "What do you fellows want now?"

"We want to go to the Emerald City of Oz and save Ozma from Wutz and the Gnome King!" explained Handy in one breathless sentence.

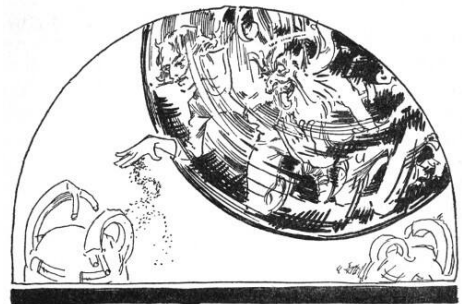
"My! All that?" Stifling another yawn, Himself grinned mischievously at the Goat Girl. "Then stand in line, please." So Handy placed herself in front of the Royal Ox and Kerry stepped behind him, and the dwarf, seizing the hammer, brought it down with a terrible blow just behind the little King. And what a blow it was you can readily understand, when I tell you that its force carried the three travelers clear out of the Silver King's Mountain and all the way to the Emerald City itself. Flying along for a moment beside them, Himself slipped the hammer back in the Goat Girl's hand, and then with another tremendous yawn, disappeared.

Chapter 20: Just in Time!

In Ozma's palace in the Emerald City, everything was very quiet and still. Not surprising when you consider that the wizard of Wutz had blown his patent stupefying powder down all the chimneys before he and Ruggedo dared to enter. Then, mooring the silver bubble to one of the castle spires, the two conspirators had slipped through an open window and proceeded without delay or interference to the private sitting room of the absent ruler. There Ruggedo with a spiteful laugh, thrust his head right into the mouths of the Hungry Tiger and Cowardly Lion. Rigid and helpless they sat before Ozma's safe, motionless and completely stupefied, as were all of Ozma's other faithful servants and retainers. Reducing the safe to a heap of green ashes was the work of but a moment, then, pulling the Gnome King's belt from the sparkling heap of treasures, Wutz sprang to his feet.

"Quick! How does it work?" he cried, clasping the belt round his thin waist. "We'll not have a second's safety till Ozma, Glinda, the Wizard of Oz and all those girl Princesses are out of the way."

"But first you must restore my Kingdom!" insisted Ruggedo, dancing up and down. "Here give it to me. I'm used to it and can work faster. First I'll wish Kaliko off my throne and myself back in my underground castle, then—"



"Oh, no, you won't!" declared Wutz, holding the bouncing Gnome King off with one hand. "How do I know what you will do once you reach your own Kingdom? Why—I might never see this belt again."

"But I promise to send it back to you," hissed Ruggedo, his eyes snapping real sparks.

"I'd rather have the belt than the promise," said Wutz, shaking his head stubbornly.

"Give it to me, I say, GIVE it to me!" yelled Ruggedo, now in a perfect rage. "How do I know what you will do when you know the trick of using it? Why, you might even turn me to a rock to be rid of me."



"What? Change my dearest friend and most powerful ally to a rock?" exclaimed

the Wizard with pretended horror. "By the left horn of my silver cow, I promise to return this belt as soon as I am Ruler of Oz!" Ruggedo longed to snatch his belt away from the scheming Silver Monarch, but as he was neither big or strong enough to do this, there was nothing for him to do but agree to the wizard's terms.

"All right," he groaned dismally. "Listen, then—" But as Wutz bent his head and the little gnome began to whisper hoarse directions in his ear, there was a dreadful thump and clatter behind them.

"STOP!" commanded the Goat Girl, the first to recover from the shock of the landing, and dear knows Handy should have been used to sudden landings by this time. "STOP!" Whirling round with a howl of fury, Wutz sprang straight at her, but Handy, who still clutched the silver hammer in her iron hand, was too quick for him and brought it down with a resounding crack on the top of his head. "Take 'em away! Take 'em away!" cried Handy hysterically, as Wutz fell over backwards, and Himself, appearing exactly where the hammer had struck, leaped off the wizard's head to save himself from a fall.



"But first we must have that magic belt," chuckled the hammer elf. Giving Ruggedo, who was struggling frantically to get his belt from around the Silver King's waist, a quick push, Himself unbuckled the clasps and tossed the magic girdle to the Goat Girl. Then grabbing the howling gnome and senseless wizard, each by his neck, the efficient dwarf vanished in a flash of lightning and a crash of thunder that shook the castle to its foundations. Nox dropped to his knees. Kerry, still stunned by the hammer blow that had carried them to the Emerald City, and Handy, herself, with her arms still upraised, stared in dumb astonishment at the quivering vacuum where the two Kings and Himself, the elf, had been whirling a moment before.

"Oh, Handy, HANDY, you've really done it!" shouted Kerry, finding his voice at last. "Why, you've saved the whole of Ozma's Kingdom and struck only one blow! But watch out—are those beasts alive or just statues?"

"Statues, I hope," grunted the Royal Ox, lurching dizzily to his feet. "Well, here we are in the capital, m'lass, and I must say you have handled everything beautifully, beautifully!"

"Halt! Who goes there! Whoa! HO! Halt and Surrender!" piped a frightened voice. "Here they are, your Majesty, the robbers themselves, caught red-handed in the act of robbing our royal safe!"



"Red—white—and—blue handed, if you ask me!" cried the Patchwork Girl, blinking her shoe button eyes at the red rubber hand with which Handy grasped the Gnome King's belt, the white hand she had reached out to hold on to Kerry, the iron hand still clutching the silver hammer. All the rest of her hands the Goat Girl held stiffly before her. Brushing aside the Soldier with the Green Whiskers, who promptly dived behind a sofa, Scraps jerked the Gnome King's belt out of Handy's rubber hand and gave her a shove that sent her flying over backwards. "Take that, you Monster!" yelled Scraps.

"Well," sputtered the Goat Girl, sprawling flat on her back, "here's gratitude for you!"

"How dare you call Handy a Monster?" bellowed Nox, charging angrily after the Patchwork Girl.

"Oh! Do be careful!" called Ozma with a little scream, as Nox almost caught up with Scraps, and Kerry began to belabor the Soldier with Green Whiskers over the head with a candlestick. "Oh! Oh! My poor Lion! My poor Tiger! My SAFE! Why, I—just—can't believe it!" wailed the little Fairy Ruler, staring sorrowfully down at the Goat Girl, who had made no attempt to rise nor explain her embarrassing position.

"Then don't believe it!" cried Kerry breathlessly. "For it isn't true! This brave girl and Nox have got the best of Wutz and the Gnome King and saved your whole bally Kingdom and here you've gone and had her knocked down. Shame on you! Get away from me, you cotton stuffed horror!" screamed the little King, as Scraps, eluding the Ox, made a determined jump in his direction.



"Quiet! QUIET!" The Scarecrow, who with Glinda, the Wizard, Dorothy, Betsy and Trot, now came hurrying into the room, raised both arms and looked around pleadingly. The whole royal party, traveling in Glinda's swan chariot, had just arrived on the balcony outside, but Ozma, Scraps and the Soldier with Green Whiskers had been first on the scene of action.



"The boy is right," declared Glinda, crossing slowly to a green sofa. "I can see by her face and hands—" Glinda smiled faintly—"that this girl is both honest and industrious."

"Thanks!" murmured Handy, as the Scarecrow, ever a gentleman, bounded forward to assist her to her feet. The flimsy straw stuffed fellow lost his balance in the attempt, but his little act of gallantry did much to relieve an awkward moment.

"You see," puffed the Scarecrow, seating Handy with a flourish, "for the last ten days we've all been pretty much upset around here and you'll have to excuse Scraps for jumping at conclusions."

"Please do!" Ozma spoke pleasantly and seriously as she seated herself in her small arm chair, leaning over to take the Gnome King's belt from Scraps. "But if some of you kind people will just explain?" The Little Fairy looked anxiously from the stupefied Tiger and Lion to her pulverized safe, her eyes coming back to rest on the Goat Girl, the great White Ox and the handsome young Munchkin.

Chapter 21: The Hammer Elf Explains

"Go ahead and explain," said Handy, closing her eyes and leaning back in her chair with all her hands hanging limply at her side. So Nox, a bit haughtily and tossing his head proudly from time to time, began at the beginning and told all that had happened since Handy Mandy had flown from Mt. Mern. How the Goat Girl had found the magic in his horn, how they had traveled together from Keretaria to the Silver Mountain and there, in their search for the little King, discovered Wutz's plot to make himself Supreme Wizard of Oz. And last of all he explained how Handy, with the help of the silver hammer, had subdued the two wicked Kings.



"Well, it certainly was very kind of you to take all this trouble for us—after you had already had so many worries of your own," sighed Ozma, as Nox, finishing his story, gazed round the room with lordly condescension.

"Yes, wasn't it?" Handy opened her eyes and thoughtfully regarded the little Ruler of Oz. "Still, I'm glad now that we did save you." The Goat Girl's round pleasant face was suddenly wreathed in smiles. "I didn't think I was going to like you, but I do," she admitted cheerfully. "I believe you're about the best ruler Oz could have and besides, you're pretty as a goat."

"As a goat!" gasped the Wizard of Oz while Dorothy and the other girls had all they could do to keep from laughing right out loud. But Ozma, who was a very understanding little person, smiled kindly back at Handy Mandy.

"Goats are pretty," she agreed, nodding her head politely. "And since you must miss your own goats very much, perhaps you would like me to send you back to Mt. Mern after you've seen a bit of the capital?"

"Oh, Handy wouldn't leave us!" snorted the Royal Ox, moving as close to the Goat Girl as he could get. "We couldn't get along without Handy Mandy, your Majesty."

"Oh, please let her stay in Keretaria," begged the little King adding his voice to that of his Royal Ox. "You will live with us in the palace, won't you Handy?"

"Well, if I just had my goats—" considered the seven-armed maiden. "Mt. Mern would seem rather dull after Oz," she acknowledged pensively. "But what about that old King who's still on Kerry's throne—and what am I to do with this silver hammer—and what do you suppose Himself has done with Wutz and Ruggedo?"



"Yes, what's to be done with Wutz?" echoed the Scarecrow wrinkling up his cotton forehead. And now the little sitting room began fairly to buzz with excited questions and suggestions, for there was still a lot to be explained and settled. The Ozites could hardly keep their eyes off the seven-armed Goat Girl, the handsome young ruler of Keretaria and his Royal Ox. Dorothy longed to unscrew his horn and test its magic power for herself, but Ozma, anxious to repair all the damage done by the wicked wizard, now raised her scepter for silence.

Clasping on the Gnome King's belt, Ozma first brought back her magic picture and with a quick wish returned Glinda's book of records to her castle in the South. Next, though she knew neither the extent nor the nature of the wizard's other thefts she caused to be restored to their rightful owners all the magic appliances in the Silver King's den. The Scarecrow had already reported the stupefied condition of the other occupants of the palace, so Ozma's next thought was to restore them to their accustomed selves. No sooner was the Cowardly Lion released than he crawled under a table, but the Hungry Tiger rushed out on the balcony, growling and lashing his tail, as he thought of the indignity he had suffered.



After a short conference with Handy Mandy, Ozma freed all the potted prisoners of the wicked wizard, and made Nifflepok King of the Silver Mountain. She moved the cliff dwellings of the people to the outside of the mountain so Wutz's pale subjects could enjoy with the rest of the Gillikins, the bright sunshine and beneficent climate of Oz. The Magic Mountain itself, with all its dark pits and jeweled caverns, Ozma sealed up tightly and forever. The wizard's agents were turned to moles, for they were already more like these boring little animals than men. After each magic wish or transformation, the little group in the royal sitting room would look in the magic picture, which Ozma had immediately repaired. And in each case Handy felt that the ruler of Oz had used both wisdom and good

judgment. Nox, as they were watching the wizard's agents turn to moles, gave a snort of surprise, for the first figure shown was old King Kerr, who was really Number Nine. As the wicked impostor changed quickly from a man to a mole and scurried off the throne and away to bury himself in the blue forest, Nox and Handy both heaved a sigh of relief and satisfaction.

While Ozma was working on the magic safe, Handy, deciding to try a little of her own magic, softly tapped the silver hammer on the arm of her chair. At once, and to the delight and interest of everyone, Himself, the elf, appeared astride the arm, holding a small cactus plant in each hand.

"I wish you in the future to obey the summons of her Majesty, Ozma of Oz," smiled the Goat Girl, placing the silver hammer as she spoke, in Ozma's lap. "This young fairy is more experienced in magic than I, and will know how to use the hammer to best advantage."

"Oh, all right! But I rather liked working for you," grinned Himself. "And say, I tried to turn these rascals to plants but this was the best I could do." Setting the two pots of cactus down on a small writing desk, the hammer elf bowed first to Handy and then to Ozma. "Wait! Don't go!" begged the little Fairy as Himself showed unmistakable signs of disappearing. "Do tell us about this silver hammer and who owned it first."

"It belonged to Wunchie, a witch of the West, who's lived in the Munchkin Mountains for about a thousand years, and used it to control as many of the Munchkin Kings as she could," explained the dwarf balancing himself cleverly on an ink well.



"Then I suppose Wunchie was responsible for the prophecy in Keretaria?" surmised Nox, blinking his eyes at the hammer elf. The dwarf nodded cheerfully. "Yes, Wunchie invented that prophecy," he told them, "and placed her own white oxen in the country. Each time she had trouble forcing the King to do as she wished, she tapped him and the ox on the head with her hammer. But I took rather a fancy to you," admitted Himself looking fondly at Nox. "So, when she ordered me to tap you off and traded little King Kerry to Wutz for a basket of jumping beans and put Wutz's agent on the throne of Keretaria, I decided to take a hand myself. So I gave you only a light tap and at the same time, I stored enough magic in your horns to help you find Kerry—and with the help of this handy Goat Girl you DID find him!" beamed the hammer elf. "I knew my magic was good. You can't work for a witch without learning good magic. But now, since everything is turning out so splendidly, I'll just go back to my tree stump. One, two—three, back—to—my—tree!"

"But what became of the witch?" cried Ozma catching hold of the dwarf's purple beard, for his head had already vanished.

"Ha, ha! She exploded and popped off!" roared a voice from the place where the elf's head had been. "I told her not to eat those jumping beans! And after that, I buried her hammer in the garden of Keretaria and there it stayed till Handy ploughed it up. Goodbye all!" And the body of the hammer elf melted into nothing and was gone.

"My—y, what a clever fellow!" chuckled Handy. "So, now Wutz and Ruggedo are a couple of cactuses! Mm—mmm! Mmmm—mm! Unpleasant to the last! Do you suppose anyone can ever disenchant them? For goatness sake be careful!" begged Handy as Jellia, in answer to her Mistress's ring, came to carry the plants to the conservatory. "Whatever you do, don't drop 'em. And to think that the Wizard is potted himself! Well, I'll never have a hand in breaking his enchantment!"



"I never thought anyone could ever break Ruggedo's enchantment," confessed Ozma. "When I changed him to a jug, I commanded him to keep that shape till he was broken by the seventh hand of a traveling Mernite. And at that time I did not even know there was such a place as Mt. Mern or a clever Goat Girl like Handy."

"But aren't you glad there was!" shouted the little Wizard of Oz tossing up his hat and catching it on his nose. "Aren't we all glad to know Handy Mandy, Nox and this jolly young King?"

"Long live the Royal Ox and the Little King of Keretaria!" cried the cheering Ozites. "Long live Handy Mandy, the seven-armed wonder of the world and OZ!" And, of course, they will live long—everyone lives long in Oz. But even if Handy lives to be a hundred, she will never forget the grand banquet given that evening in her honor. Besides the famous people she already knew, the Goat Girl was presented to all the other celebrities at Ozma's court, and shaking hands with them heartily and seven at a time, she had never been so flattered and fussed over in her life. Nox and Kerry came in for their share of honors, too. There was nothing the Ozians would not have done for their three new friends and rescuers. Ozma, overwhelmed by Handy's generosity in giving her the silver hammer, and already indebted to her for saving the Kingdom, racked her brains for some wonderful gift to reward the brave mountain lass. But it was Nox who solved the difficulty by confiding to Ozma that Handy desired more than

anything else a set of gloves for her hands. It seemed she had never had enough gloves for more than two at a time. So, smiling secretly to herself, Ozma gave the Goat Girl seven sets of fine kid gloves and an emerald necklace that wound three times round her sturdy neck. With the necklace, a complete new outfit and her forty-nine gloves, Handy Mandy felt herself quite ready for high life and royal society.

"Though you really should wear a boxing glove on that iron hand," whispered the Scarecrow, as Handy blushing resumed her seat after Ozma's speech of presentation. "Stay in the Emerald City and we will make you a general in the army," promised the straw man earnestly. But Handy shook her head with tears of merriment in her eyes. Though she never quite forgave Scraps for pushing her over, she and the Scarecrow were already as friendly and easy as an old pair of shoes. "Handy Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday," the straw man had nicknamed her because she had a hand for every day in the week.

Nox had insisted on Himself being invited to the banquet and the clever elf added much to the pleasure and hilarity of that memorable occasion. Indeed, many times afterward when she felt bored or lonely, Ozma would summon Himself just to amuse and cheer her up. The silver hammer was stored away with the other important magic treasures and is regarded by many as the most powerful magic in the castle. Handy Mandy kept the blue flower to help her on future journeys and after she and her two friends had spent a happy week in the Emerald City, Ozma reluctantly wished Kerry and Nox to Keretaria and the Goat Girl back to Mt. Mern.

Here, for a month, Handy Mandy astonished the villagers with the story of her travels, then gathering up her goats she took herself and them back by a fast wishing pill the Wizard had given her—to the Kingdom of Keretaria. As the Goat Girl's hands retained all of their strength and willingness, and Nox's horns all their magic—even to giving wise and useful messages, these two and little Kerry ruled the Kingdom between them with such skill and cleverness everyone was enormously happy and prosperous!



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