

Topaz
and the
Plum-Gista Stone

Tales of Topaz the Conjure Cat



Pat Frayne

Topaz and the Plum-Gista Stone

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Tales of Topaz the Conjure Cat Books

Topaz and the Evil Wizard

Topaz and the Plum-Gista Stone

Topaz and the Green Fairies

*For all my children and grandchildren
who love fantasy and mystical adventures*

Chapter One



The soft rustling of dry pinecones caught the Great Horned Owl's attention. His head swiveled, and his feathered tufts stiffened. "H'hoo, is anyone there?"

Birds twittered and the squawks of a startled blue jay faded into the distance. A gentle breeze ruffled the owl's mottled brown feathers. He hooted once more and turned his face into the rising sun.

The chubby raccoon stopped digging and laid his cache of beetle grubs aside. He rose on his haunches and squinted against the sun as his dark eyes scanned the tops of the tall yellow pines. "Otis? Is that you? Where are you?"

The owl blinked. "I'm right up here, Dooley."

Dooley crossed a narrow trickling stream and climbed the short steep slope to the base of the next tree. "Where?"

"From the sound of your voice, I'd say I'm right above you. Can't you see me?"

“It’s hard to see anything up there. Come down here — I want to show you something.”

Otis moved toward the end of the branch. He stopped after a few steps and dug his powerful talons into the soft wood to brace himself against an unexpected gust of wind. “Can you see me now?”

The raccoon tilted his head back, straining his neck for a glimpse of the owl. “Too much glare. Come down here, Otis.”

“I wish I could.”

“You wish you could?” Dooley cocked his head to the side. “What does that mean?”

“It means...I’m afraid to fly.”

Dooley scratched behind one of his ears with a black finger. “You’re an owl. Since when are owls afraid to fly?”

“Since I woke up blind.”

“What? Say again, Otis.” Dooley’s brow furrowed. He shook his gray head as if to clear his ears.



The young fawn eyed the sleeping Yellow Conjure Cat with annoyance. The cat’s thick fur, a buttery yellow striped with pale orange, gleamed in the light of the early morning sun. The fawn paced beside the cat’s four-poster bed, her frustration growing. Should she wake him?

She stamped her front hoof on the plank wood floor at the head of his bed. The huge conjure cat awoke with a start. The fawn breathed a heavy sigh. “It’s about time you woke up.”

The conjure cat stifled a yawn and rolled onto his tummy. He was so large, his lean muscular body took up the entire length of the bed. “What’s the matter? Is something wrong, Daisy?”

“The sun’s up. When are you going to get out of bed?”

“Why do I have to get up so early?” The cat gazed at Daisy with strange luminous eyes the color of yellow topaz, the gemstone for which his father had named him.

“Are you going to sleep all day, Topaz? This is the first day of the Fall Festival. Don’t you remember? There’s still much to do before the parade starts.”

Topaz stood up on his bed to stretch. A long yawn exposed his curled pink tongue and every feline tooth in his broad striped head. He gave Daisy another long glassy stare before collapsing back into his deep, warm downy mattress.

That stare, those eerie glowing eyes. Daisy felt a stab of uneasiness. Unsettling. Sometimes, like now, Daisy imagined Topaz looked right through her. *Can he see inside my soul? What if he hears everything I’m thinking?*

She wasn’t sure what magical feats a Yellow Conjure Cat might be capable of, but she knew there were many. Conjure cats were born with unusual mystical powers, and their lives were long. Topaz had once told her he was more than three hundred years old. For a Yellow Conjure Cat, that was young.

“Come on, Topaz. Wake up.”

“I am awake,” Topaz mumbled, his voice still drowsy with sleep. His eyes opened a sliver and closed again.

Daisy heaved another sigh and stamped her hoof harder. “You must get up. You’re the King of Knownotten Kingdom,” she whined. “Everyone expects you to lead the parade.”

“I haven’t forgotten that, Daisy.” Topaz stood up for another stretch, this time arching his back into a bow. His legs stiffened, and a slight tremor shimmied through his long, furry frame and all four of his legs. With a deep guttural groan, he pounced to the floor. “Come, we’ll have something to eat before we get started.”



Topaz padded down the curved stone stairwell a few paces behind Daisy. As Knownotten's new ruler, the welfare of the kingdom was not the only responsibility he had inherited. The late Elf king's ward, Daisy, was under his care as well.

Shortly after her birth, his good friend Otis had snatched the orphaned fawn from the swirling waters of a flash flood and brought her to the castle, knowing the softhearted Elf king would give her a home.

In the castle dining room, Daisy chattered about the upcoming festival as she gulped bites of her morning meal. "Orange Blossom wants to help, too. And guess what? She told me she's having a party after the festival closes down for the day."

Lost in his own thoughts, Topaz nibbled on a chunk of white cheese and slurped his warm tea. Only four moons had passed since the Good Spirit had taken the Elf king to his rest.

As the king's lifetime friend and his appointed advisor, Topaz was the logical replacement. This was not the future he would have chosen for himself. However, the late king, having outlived all his heirs, made Topaz promise to take the oath to succeed him upon his death.

"Topaz, are you listening? I asked you an important question."

"I'm listening, just thinking about how I should answer."

Daisy batted her thick lashes. "And have you decided?"

"All right," Topaz groaned. "You may go to Orange Blossom's party. But this time you must be home before dusk."

"Don't worry, Topaz. I learned my lesson last time." Daisy swallowed the strawberry she'd been chewing. "How come you're so quiet? Are you missing King Kittle?"

Topaz nodded. "Sundays are hardest. Mostly, I miss our long walks in the woods and our teas in the rose garden with Otis."

Daisy licked a drizzle of honey from her plate. "I still miss him too. Otis says we'll get used to it someday."

“Otis is right, Daisy, but it may take a long time.”

Topaz and Daisy both started when they heard the loud verbal exchange in the hall just outside the dining room. “I have urgent business with the king,” an irritable voice shouted above all the others just before the double doors burst open.

The raccoon strode into the room. Two of the king’s Elf guards followed close behind him.

His bushy ringed tail swished in agitation as he made his way to the table. The whitish circles around his black eyes stood out in what otherwise would have been a plain grayish face. This breed of raccoon did not have a black facial mask. Nor was he noted for his manners or his tactfulness. Topaz raised a paw and made a dismissive gesture. The Elf guards left the room, closing the double doors behind them. “Dooley, what’s this about?”

Dooley nodded to Daisy before he addressed Topaz. “Didn’t mean to be so abrupt, but something bad has happened to Otis.”

Daisy craned forward, her hazel eyes larger and brighter than usual. “Something bad? What? What’s happened to Otis?”

“The great owl is stuck in a tree. He says he can’t get down.” Dooley rose from his haunches, spreading his small black hands in front of him in a gesture of hopelessness.

Topaz and Daisy stared at the raccoon in disbelief. It made no sense. How was it possible for the great owl, as Otis was so often called, to be stuck in a tree?

“There’s something you ought to know,” Dooley said, calling Topaz aside as Daisy dashed out the front door ahead of them. “I didn’t want to say this in front of Daisy, but Otis is blind.”

“Blind - are you sure? What happened to him?”

“Otis doesn’t know, but he’s been stuck in that tree for more than two days.”

“I suppose it’s too late to talk Daisy into staying here, now.” Topaz wagged his head. “Not that it really matters; she’ll find out about this soon enough.”



By the time the trio reached the mountainous part of the Knownotten Forest, the sun had risen well above the treetops.

“What about the parade? We’ll never get back in time,” Daisy griped. “What will everyone say if there’s no king to lead it?”

“I’ll make it up to them, Daisy.” Topaz scratched his chin with a hind paw. “You shouldn’t miss out though. Why don’t you go back before it’s too late?”

“I want to see Otis stuck in a tree. Can’t I come, too?”

Topaz arched his tail. He’d hoped Daisy would go home. He wanted to talk to Otis alone, before Daisy found out about his blindness. Maybe this problem with his friend’s eyes wasn’t as serious as it sounded.

“Come on,” Dooley huffed over his shoulder. “We’ve got a long way to go, and lots of climbing ahead.”

The raccoon led them up the mountain to where the tallest yellow pines grew. They climbed until Dooley came to the tree where he’d last spoken with Otis. “Hello up there, Otis. I’ve brought Topaz and Daisy with me.”

“I’m still here,” Otis hooted.

Everyone stared up into the top of the yellow pine. There sat the great owl, his huge golden eyes blinking.

Daisy walked around the base of the tree. “This must be the biggest, tallest tree in the whole forest.”

“That’s why I like this tree. This is my home.”

“How come you’re stuck up there? Did you hurt your wings?”

Otis’ feathered ear tufts twitched. “Didn’t Dooley tell you? I’m as blind as a mole.”

“Blind?” Daisy’s head whirled ‘round to stare at Topaz. Tears sprang into her wild hazel eyes.

“This may not be as bad as it seems, Daisy,” he said in a low voice. “Let’s get Otis down first. Then we’ll see what’s to be done.”

Daisy lifted her chin to sniff back her tears. “Otis, how did this happen to you?”

“Wish I knew.”

“... I’m sorry for you, Otis. But please...try not to worry about it just now. Topaz says we’re going to get you down from there.”

Otis stiffened. “How do you plan to do that?”

Topaz studied the network of branches below the owl’s perch. Otis was huge for a Great Horned Owl. His wingspan extended ten feet. Without proper guidance, the owl’s excursion to the forest floor could end in tragedy. Topaz worried Otis would fly into something and injure one of those precious wings before he made a safe landing.

“To answer your question, Otis, the only way to do this is one branch at a time. I can help, but you must do exactly as I tell you.”



“I knew you could do it.” Daisy shouted when the great owl made it to the last branch.

“It helps having you here to cheer me on. Hoping from branch to branch wasn’t as scary as I thought it would be.”

Dooley’s whiskers twitched. “Thanks to Topaz. He gives good directions.”

“Now it’s time to fly.” Topaz told Otis. “You’re not that far from the ground now, so take a deep breath, and open your wings. When you push off the branch, go to the right.”

Otis stretched his wings and flapped them a few times for practice. Afterward, he spread his wings by half and pushed off the branch with his talons.

“Nooooo,” Topaz shouted. “To *your* right, Otis... Go to the right.”

Otis quickly changed direction.

Daisy seemed to be holding her breath while she watched the great owl glide somewhat gracefully to the ground. The moment Otis’ talons touched the earth, she ran to him. “You did good, Otis. I wish I had wings.”

Dooley turned to Topaz. “Daisy seems to be taking the news a lot better than we expected.”

Topaz nodded. He too was mystified by Daisy’s unusual calm. Maybe Daisy was just trying to be brave for Otis’ sake.

He left to find the owl something to eat while Dooley steered Otis to the thin, trickling stream for a drink.

Once the great owl’s basic needs were met, Topaz turned his attention to what might have caused Otis to lose his eyesight. On their last adventure together, he recalled how Otis had flown into the face of the giant Troll, plucking out the Troll’s only good eye with one swift snap of his beak.

Did this have something to do with that? Or might it have happened because Otis picked up the evil wizard’s scepter? Any way he thought about it, the conclusion was the same.

Dooley sauntered up to him. “I think I’m thinking what you’re thinking.”

“Yes,” Topaz answered. “I’m certain there’s some evil business at work here. This must be a curse. Perhaps it’s retaliation for the Troll’s lost eye.”

The raccoon cocked his head and gave Topaz a scornful look. “The eye was never lost, Topaz. Otis ripped the eye from the Troll’s head with his beak and left a bloody socket.”

Topaz ignored the rough remark. Since Dooley’s move to Knownotten, he’d gotten used to the raccoon’s brassy personality.

“If it is a curse, what do we do?” Dooley scratched behind one ear and then the other while he waited for Topaz to answer. “Thought these nasty fleas were gone,” he mumbled half aloud.

Not wanting to catch fleas himself, Topaz took a few steps back from the scratching raccoon. “We must take him to North Fortress. The Gnomes will know if it truly is a curse.”

Dooley stopped scratching long enough to peer up at Topaz. “And what do we do if it is?”

“The Healing Gnomes will know what’s to be done. There must be a cure.”

“If we’re going, don’t you think we ought to get started? It’s a long journey as I remember it.”

Topaz glanced over where Otis and Daisy stood talking. “I’ll send Daisy home first.”

He called Daisy aside and explained where he and Dooley needed to take Otis and why it was necessary. “When you return to the castle, don’t forget to tell Lister and the Elf guards that I’ve left the kingdom. Tell Lister I expect to return within a few days.”

Daisy pawed the ground with a front hoof. “A few days? Oh, please, Topaz, I want to come with you. I want to be with Otis; you can’t send me back now.”

Topaz opened his mouth to speak. He’d thought of several reasons why Daisy shouldn’t come, but she wasn’t about to listen to any of them.

“You must let me come, Topaz. I can help. Really. I know an Elf boy named Dun, and I know his grandfather - Grandfather Mitty. Their cottage is only a little ways from here.”

Topaz was patient while Daisy explained how the old grandfather, a carpenter, could be of help, and why Topaz should consider her plan to come along.

“What about the Fall Festival?” Topaz rose from his haunches to pace.

“You said we’d only be gone a few days, and the festival won’t be much fun without you and Otis and Dooley. Anyhow, you need me, Topaz. Please...?”

Since King Kittle’s death, Daisy followed him and Otis everywhere, if they’d let her. They were her family now. How could he leave her? Besides, Daisy’s plan was sound.

Topaz stopped pacing in front of her. “This journey will not be easy, Daisy. It’s two long days of hard travel through the mountains, and sleeping out in the cold at night. Mind you - the food won’t be what you’re used to eating.”

Daisy gave him her solemn face. “Those are all of the reasons you should let me come. We have to think about what’s good for Otis, now. I know we’ll get there faster if you let me come too.”

This wasn’t what Topaz expected to hear from Daisy. At times, she could be thoughtful and wise. At other times, she was impossible. He guessed it was because she was so strong-willed. Besides that, Daisy had never been predictable. Topaz decided to give in now, and save some time. “Come along, then.”

Daisy’s eyes brightened. “You’ll be glad you let me come.”

Topaz gave her a nod. He wanted to say something like - “I hope you’re really up to this.” Instead, he merely chuckled to himself. Daisy’s unpredictable nature had led him astray more than once, like when he’d given her the name Daisy.

Daisies were her favorite flower. He’d seen her snacking on them whenever she thought she was alone in the castle garden. So, he and King Kittle began calling her Daisy.

Within a few days, however, her appetite changed. Daisy’s new favorite flower became King Kittle’s much-loved red roses. Not that the old Elf king minded. Nothing she did displeased him. It’s just that Topaz wished he’d waited a while longer before giving her a name. Except for the timing, she might have been called Rose.

After his conversation with Daisy, Topaz spoke to Otis. “We’d like to take you to see the Healing Gnomes. They may have a cure.”

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Otis was thoughtful. “The Healing Gnomes can cure almost anything. I’d trust them with my life. But how will I ever get there?”

“That part of the plan has already been worked out. Daisy can tell you all about it on the way to Dun’s cottage.”

Otis’ feathered tufts twitched. “Who?”

Chapter Two



The climb down the mountain was not as difficult for Otis as Topaz had imagined. Dooley stayed by his side, guiding him along the way. Once the terrain leveled off, Otis walked along between Dooley and Daisy. Several minutes later, the foursome arrived at the cottage.

When Dun opened the door and glimpsed the group huddled before him, his eyes widened into a gaping stare, and his chin dropped. Topaz guessed the youngster hadn't expected to find the King of Knownotten, along with a bunch of others, standing on his doorstep.

"Sorry, Dun," Daisy said, seeing the look on his face. "I should have come ahead to warn you, but I didn't think of it 'til just now."

Dun managed a smile before stepping back to open the door wider. "King Topaz. Welcome. Please come in." Dun made a quick awkward bow from the waist. "Come in, all of you."