

T. C. BARTLETT



THE
GOOD
WITCH
OF THE SOUTH

AN OZARIAN ADVENTURE IN THE LAND OF OZ

A NOVEL

THE GOOD WITCH OF THE SOUTH



Also by T. C. BARTLETT

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To Kim, my North Star
&
To Noelani T.,
for her courage, her strength,
and her beauty when she
dances across the stage

*A*uthor's Note:



*I*t might be of some interest to know in L. Frank Baum's classic 1900 children's novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Glinda was the Good Witch of the South, not the North. She was also known as Glinda the Good.

The Good Witch of the North was never named in Baum's books about Oz. But he did give her the moniker Locasta for his musical extravaganza titled *The Wizard of Oz*. Baum's musical premiered in 1902 at the Chicago Grand Opera House and later moved to the Majestic Theatre on Broadway in 1903, where it ran for 293 performances until 1904, followed by traveling tours.

In the 1939 MGM movie *The Wizard of Oz*, with Judy Garland, the North and South Ozarian Witches were combined for the sake of the film and for no other reason. As well, in Baum's book, the magic slippers are silver and were changed to ruby slippers for the movie to take greater advantage of its technicolor cinematography, which was relatively new in 1939.

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SANDHILL
PUBLISHERS, LLC
AN AMERICAN PUBLISHING COMPANY

*Take heart to all who
fly over the rainbow—and be warned—all that
you know to be the truth
will be something entirely different
somewhere else . . .*

Prologue



There is no greater threat to freedom than that which comes from wickedness.

—*Dorothy Gale*, A Call to Arms
Appeal to The Great Head, Emerald City, 1939

Many unexpected events ensued after the Wicked Witch of the West was vanquished—a nicer way of saying liquidated or killed—or, as some said, the crusty old tart was murdered by the little redheaded, freckled-faced country girl from Kansas, Dorothy Gale. The thing is, it doesn't matter how you wish to remember that momentous historical event. That is entirely up to you. The fact of the matter is, the meltdown of the fiendish western witch destroyed her iniquitous behavior. And a good thing, indeed, no doubt about it; just ask the Munchkins and the Winkies. Both of which know the loss of freedom and being held under the thumb of wickedness.

But stories abound about Dorothy Gale and the demise of the Wicked Witch and what happened after. They have circulated, become swollen, and have faded throughout the ages, taking on new form and luster with each telling, all the way up until now, as I tell you of what really came to pass during those perilous days that brought Oz to its knees.



On that eve when Dorothy snuffed the life out of the evil witch, the Enchanted Forest was ripe with delicious, red apples ready

for the picking, but only if you asked the trees politely. A terrible storm was creeping in from the east, spitting, sputtering, and wailing with violent intent. Nightmarish, deep purple-and-black early summer thunderclouds mounted, billowed and surged thousands of feet up, choking the troposphere. The temperature dropped, and miles away thunder echoed as gnarled fingers of lightning spat out in all directions from the portentous clouds blocking out the western sky. As the wind picked up, it whipped and batted the lit candles in the lanterns hanging on the walls of the Wicked Witch's castle to a flickering frenzy.

When Dorothy asked if she could have the burnt broomstick the malicious hag had used to try and set the Scarecrow on fire, the head guard, Lucius, asked, "Why? Why would you want a keepsake that carries with it so much evil?"

"To prove to the Great Head that wickedness has been destroyed."

Lucius looked into Dorothy's sparkling earnest sapphire blue eyes, studying her. *Such a brave child*, he thought.

Holding the broomstick in both hands while on bended knee, he happily handed the burnt broomstick to the sweet young girl. "Please take this with you, and with our blessings," he said with relief and exhaustion that was evident within his kind, golden-colored eyes and etched across his brow. He then paused as he stood and looked down upon Dorothy, giving her a gentle, soft smile. "The witch was a dangerous tyrant. We had no way to expel her from our thoughts until you destroyed her evil wickedness. So please take this too." He handed Dorothy the golden cap that gave the one who possessed it three wishes to summon the king of the winged monkeys to do their bidding. "A gift. May it help you find your Kansas."

With a soft and kind voice, he then explained how the witch had stolen the magical cap from Quelala, the first king of the winged monkeys, and selfishly used her wishes to build her army and subjugate and oppress all the good people who lived in Winkie Country. At the thought of the witch's demise, his smile became broader. The light from the lanterns cast an eerie glow on his ice-blue and yellowish-green skin, as he raised his pike above his head, proclaiming, "Hail to

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Dorothy! At last, the wicked old witch is dead!”

Then all the guards joined in, their cries echoing throughout the corridors of the castle. “Hoorah! Hoorah! Hail to Dorothy! The wicked old witch is dead!”



The thunderclouds finally broke loose and the first hard drops of rain fell, washing the last remains of the slimy goo left behind from the melted witch out through the drainpipe and down into the Western River two hundred feet below, never to be seen again.

Meanwhile, in the great hall of the castle, the dreariness of the stormy night did not stop the celebration. Joyous and hardy laughter continued long into the evening as everyone ate and drank, hailing Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion.

Eating so much food and drinking more than they should have—including Dorothy—eventually lulled them all into a deep slumber, except for Lucius.

The Wicked Witch of the West had performed horrible magic on Lucius, transforming him in a significant way from the inside out. The process took weeks, with many dark spells tweaking and twisting every cell in his body. He told me it was like being stung by a thousand wasps. But when the wings started to grow, the pain was . . . well, it was indescribable. (The other gruesome acts of evil I cannot, and will not, tell you.) Suffice it to say, the witch was a horrible creature who cast her black magic for her own corrupt and avaricious needs, without any concern for the good people she persecuted. It changed Lucius, infusing him with something foreign to his nature. He became an entirely different thing, a strange being, half himself, and half something else.

At first, once he recovered from the witch’s spells, he felt ashamed, embarrassed, and guilty—because he *liked* having wings. He fell in love with flying and became addicted to the rush of it, the thrill of it. Still, his guilt and embarrassment nagged at him, and he never went

anywhere without wearing his captain's coat to hide his wings, to keep his shame to himself.



The Land of Oz had weathered tough times brought on by the evil of the loathsome Witch of the West. Lucius was only one of the thousands of victims she'd experimented on, tortured, or killed. He was glad the wrinkled old crone was dead. But he worried that another storm would brew, one murderous and desperate, if he didn't act quickly and hide the witch's baby daughter—his daughter—in a place of safekeeping. For without his consent, while under the evil witch's spell the Wicked Witch had made him her consort. As a result, they had a baby girl, Elleanora, and Lucius loved her despite her fiendish, monstrous mother and the circumstances of her birth. He had promised himself that she would never know wickedness. He also couldn't take the chance that the Great Head, the Wizard of Oz, would condemn his daughter to death just because she was the spawn of such a perniciously foul and sinister being.

So that very night, when all were asleep (some snoring and moaning from far too much ale), he stole away into the dark, cradling his daughter in his arms, and traveled to the other end of Oz, to Quadling Country. There, good fortune fell upon him and he found love and married Glinda Goodwitch, the Good Witch of the South.



You may be asking yourself, who is this person telling this tale? Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain, as it were; who I am is of no consequence.

I will tell you this: I was there that joyous but stormy night when Dorothy doused the Wicked Witch with water and destroyed the demon-magic that was sweeping through the great land of Oz. And years later, I fought in the last great war in Oz and watched my sisters,

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my fellow warriors, my friends, fall by my side. I held their heads in my arms as they took their last breaths, and shed all the tears I had for those I loved and lost during that senseless and most egregious of campaigns.

Only a handful are still alive who remember. I am one of those who has not been dropped in a box and planted in the dirt for the worms to gorge upon their flesh, a witness to the story you are about to read. That is all you need to know. It will be up to you to decide if what I tell you is the truth or not.

Sadly though, history has the most obnoxious habit of repeating itself. There will always be wickedness slithering in and out of the dark shadows of this world, waiting for the right moment to show itself. And when it washes across the land, it comes for us all, cloaked in colors that are dark and dangerous.

The Goodwitch castle sits peacefully in the southern portion of Quadling Country. It is a vast realm that embraces a wide variety of geography and climate, and stretches out over four thousand miles from horizon to horizon, covering almost the entire southern portion of the world.

The heart of the country is flat and temperate, much of which is scattered with fertile farmland and small villages. Slightly North of the Goodwitch castle are the great Quadling Peaks, which mark a five-hundred-mile straight line from east to west. Beyond that, further north and past the City of Emeralds is the Impassable Desert that stretches out from the northernmost borders of Gillikin Country. To the south is the Great Sandy Waste, which has remained uncrossed, and to the West is the expansive and mostly unexplored Enchanted Forest.

In recent years, darkness has been growing unchecked in the West and slowly rolling east into Quadling Country, with rumors of a demon fairy putting a spell on the citizens of Winkie Country to build an army.

All who live in the great and wonderful land of Oz are worried, and for good reason . . .



PART ONE

RUMORS
OF
WAR

One



She crouched like a spider clinging to its web, waiting patiently for an unsuspecting insect to fall into her trap. Her left hand grasped the gilded flagpole, while the other gently moved across the cold, smooth slate shingles on the turret roof of her bedroom. The triangular flag above her head—frayed at its tip—whipped and snapped from a robust and single-minded breeze, like a bullwhip nipping the hindquarters of a bull. She shivered. Her stomach churned. Bubbled.

The *rush*. Oh, the rush. The thrill of it. It made her heart race.

It was calling her. A little danger, a little risk. With each thud, she could feel her blood coursing through her veins, making a sound like war drums pounding in her ears. The sound of being *alive* and the need to be steering her own fate—for better or worse. She inhaled deeply, feeling her ribs expand with the brisk, early morning spring air. She smiled. The rush filled her, made her body warmer, and gave her ice-blue, greenish skin a rosy glow. Yes, excruciating as it was, she had to wait. So she waited.

Perched a few hundred feet up on the highest point of her mother's castle while spying on the ant-like creatures swarming below always seemed to snap things into perspective for Samantha; it brought the world into focus. Sounds were more animated, colors more penetrating, exuberant, energetic. Hazy, turbulent thoughts became sharp, concise, and joyful memories, luminous and forceful. She could feel every muscle, every tendon in her body compress,

coiling to a tight spring ready to release at just the right moment. It made her feel more like who she was meant to be—more alive, more real, more everything.



Everyone called her Sam. It was a nickname she adored; it made her feel different. It made her feel strong, secure, and connected somehow. Sam's eyes narrowed, the rush growing and growing, churning, bubbling. And waiting. From this height, the Yellow Brick Road, with its various switchbacks, slithers its way over hills and valleys like a snake rustling through thick brush. She could see miles across Quadling Country. Her eyes scanned anxiously through the dawn's half-light. She could also see the Red Brick Road off to the west, but only bits and pieces of it, peeking out from a break in the carpet of trees or rolling through farmland or when it climbed both sides of a U-shaped valley. The other brick roads, the Green and Blue ones, were hidden from her sight. But all brick roads start and spiral out from the town square of Munchkin City, each taking off in different directions. They traverse the four quadrants of the great land of Oz and end in the very center of the world, where the City of Emeralds, the capital of Oz, spreads out in all its sparkling glory.

She loved this view. The pinkish morning sunlight breaking over the crest of the great Quadling Mountain Range clad in wind-buffed and hard-packed snow. The bright, crisp sky with scattered puffs of white. The deep, long shadows. She loved all of it—she couldn't get enough of it. And each time she found herself taking in this sight she released a soft, contented sigh. Perfect days like this were not uncommon, but as of late they had become harder to find, and it was tempting to believe they were becoming mere illusions. Not this day, however. Today was perfect, despite what was veiled in the background of Sam's thoughts.

She leaned out to look over the slate-shingled roofline. Directly below her was the castle's keep, where the elite castle guards, mostly

women, were doing their early morning training with swords, pikes, bows and arrows, and maces. From such a height, it wasn't difficult for Sam to recognize people from the tops of their heads, especially for Saran. She could always pick out Saran, even if all she had to go on was the click of Saran's heels on the flagstone floors or the sound of her light, understated laugh behind closed doors. Saran was Sam's favorite of her mother's personal guards. The one her mother trusted the most. She was the captain, the First Consola, a position that was highly respected and aggressively sought after, a rank only the strongest and most daring ever achieved. And Saran, with her long white hair braided in cornrows and her chiseled features had *brave* written all over her. She was worthy of the position she held: a fearless warrior. Sam's eyesight was keen. She could change the focal length in her eyes and could easily zoom in on her prey. And spying on the First Consola during her morning routine gave Sam a particular thrill to the start of her day. One she anticipated with intense enjoyment.

When the guard next to Saran removed her helmet to dry the sweat on her face with the scarf from around her neck, Sam noticed the guard's unmistakable bright, strawberry blonde hair. It was Lillith, Saran's second. A powerful, tall, strong woman, quiet and kind—a woman of few words. But make no mistake, she'd slice off the head of a snake in a blink if it were venomous and about to strike. She wore a black patch over her left eye. A visible whitish scar ran from the top right side of her forehead. It started an inch above her hairline where hair didn't grow, down through the center of her eyebrow, disappearing behind the eyepatch. The cicatrix continued below the empty eye socket and along her cheek, ending near her ear—a remembrance of a battle hard fought to keep evil at bay and the sacrifice it took.

Next to Lillith was another soldier. She was much older than Lillith and Saran. Sam recognized the soldier's weapon and could never forget her well-lined face, always walking around with a grim expression. Her palms were grotesquely seamed with scars, but it was the mace she held in her hands that drew Sam's eye: a round ball of iron that was studded with steel spikes, each sharpened to a pinpoint.

A natural killer, Sam thought. But a mace was merely window dressing unless wielded with the ferocity to make it useful. The soldier's choice of weapon should have chilled her, but instead, Sam was comforted by the presence of this woman, this royal guard, who had clearly lived with violence for so much of her life and had pledged loyalty to her mother's realm. "*Loyalty comes from how a queen rules the land with an open and honest hand,*" her mother had told Sam many times. "*Not from gold or silver.*"

Lillith was muttering to a different soldier standing several arms' lengths from her right, waiting respectfully for her turn to spar with the First Consola. Suddenly, the soldier and Lillith looked off in the direction of the drawbridge. Then Sam heard someone on a horse—no, three horses. She could not make out their voices, but she did hear the echoed clacking of the horse's hooves on the cobblestones before they emerged from around the corner. The riders wore the uniforms of messengers. The colors they carried and the cut of their saddles said they came from the west, from Winkie Country. One of the men handed Saran a scroll as he spoke to her. They tipped their heads to each other and the horsemen cantered off, their horses placing their feet delicately, as it was dangerous to ride too quickly across the cobbled courtyard.



With urgency in each step, Saran and Lillith disappeared from Sam's view, no doubt to deliver the scroll to her mother, the queen, while the other guards continued their morning routine. Sam didn't have any desire to know what cheerless report had been written on the scroll, no need to understand what was going on. But when three couriers are sent to deliver a message, the news they bring most certainly will not be good. That thought gave her no pleasure.

Right now, all she wanted to do was think about the rush, and yet she found her mind drifting away from the thrill of it. Sam was determined not listen to her worries. She would not allow dark clouds

to smother a perfect day, so she searched for something else, something that made her smile, something more pleasing to her, something that pushed her concerns to the back of her mind. She closed her eyes and let the cool morning breeze tiptoe across her face. She'd hardly seen her mother and her stepsister for a week as they wrestled with the messages and the messengers, in hopes they could slow down what they were sure was coming. There were rumblings of dissent from the western country of the Winkies—whispers of a nameless evil, a terrible sorceress, someone who put all who looked upon her under her spell. Another Wicked Witch of the West perhaps, or something much darker and more sinister. The gossip was that someone from the land of the Winkies, either a good fairy or good enough to look it, had carried a bit of demon-magic east across the border into Quadling Country, the country ruled by Sam's mother, Glinda Goodwitch.

It was said that this enchantress, whomever or whatever she might genuinely be, had set herself up as the Queen of the Winkies. And to make matters worse, and possibly dire, the rumors alluded to the fact that this nameless witch had forced taxes on the local farmers and townsfolk to support the raising of an army to overthrow Glinda, with the intention of taking control of the City of Emeralds in order to sit on the Great Head's throne. It was well known that Glinda was the greatest and most powerful of all the witch fairies in the land. If anyone had the desire to rule the land of Oz, had the audacity to even try, their first course of action would be to dispose of the Good Witch of the South. And if they were able to accomplish the unthinkable, the usurper would then merely take a casual walk into the capital to grab the Wizard of Oz by the throat and force him to his knees.

Sam opened her eyes and blinked twice, needing a moment to think and recall something else she had heard. There had been another rumor, a much fainter one, a suggestion that was only whispered behind closed doors: this enchantress had found a way to fly over the rainbow to the land of Kansas and had killed Dorothy Gale and snatched the golden cap out of Dorothy's cold, dead hands to use for herself, to sway the winged monkeys and take control of the

Winkies to build her army. This rumor was far more worrisome, for if true, having the golden cap would make this dark fairy an even more injurious adversary.

Her mother's army was a mixture of women and a few men from every country, providence, and region of Oz—formidable, proud warriors who would defend their queen and the people of Quadling Country at all cost, sacrificing their lives if need be. They believed there was no such thing as a no-win scenario. Only a few soldiers were from Winkie Country, and oddly enough, they had been missing since the rumors began. Every bit of strange happenings, hearsay, and gossip only added weight to the rumors that wickedness was once again seeping out from the west, creeping out of Winkie Country and pushing its evil self into Quadling Country.

There were also whispers that the Cowardly Lion, the King of the Enchanted Forest, was missing. Some said he'd been captured by the unknown villainous witch, held in a cage and deprived of food, just as the Wicked Witch of the West had done. Others were heard saying that he'd been slain and left for crows to pick on. There was even fearful prattle that the Tin Woodman had been turned into a beehive, fulfilling a promise made by the Wicked Witch of the West, and that the enchantress was using the Scarecrow's straw for her mattress and bed pillows. *Rumors*, Sam thought, *are only rumors until proven otherwise.*

But Sam knew her mother never took rumors lightly.

Her mother was ageless, a good fairy witch, both beautiful and young to all those who looked into her scintillating, kind, pure winter-blue eyes, with a pearl of timeless wisdom that was apparent by how she ruled Quadling Country. Her skin was a pale lime green and her hair was a rich, reddish-gold color that fell in flowing ringlets over her shoulders. She was deeply loved and respected by all the people, especially the animals (speaking and nonspeaking alike) and all the other remarkable creatures who lived in the kingdom of Oz. Queen Goodwitch was a great queen, a thoughtful and fair queen who made sure that the poor were fed and the sick doctored, sitting on her throne dispensing justice to those who couldn't seek justice for themselves.

Glinda had decided not to give credence to the rumors, or rather to give them just enough consideration to not discount them completely, so that none of the Quadlings she was the protector of, or the Munchkins who loved her so, would think she shunned the worrisome chatter out of fear. The good witch queen publicly announced that she would make an informal, but royal, visit to Winkie Country to personally speak with Rumpart, the King of the Winkies, in the hope that it would ease any concerns her subjects had, as well as any doubt that seemed to sit lightly in her own mind.

With her would go her First Consola, Saran, the commander of her army; her stepdaughter, Elleanora; a substantial portion of her elite guards; and the same of her court, with all its finery, jewels, and gowns, for a grand show of courtesy. While doing so, she would politely show the army at her back and remind Rumpart of that fact. He was the king for no other reason than his father had been king. But Rumpart's father had been a much better man, a wiser and kinder one, a respected ruler who had been fair and understanding. He was much loved by his subjects and had promised the Tin Woodman—who had given him the crown—that he would never allow slavery to befall the Winkies ever again, as it had when the Wicked Witch of the West ruled Winkie Country. But Taggart Rumpart II had none of his father's qualities. He cared only for his own well-being and personal wealth; he was unpredictable, and easily bribed. If he were indeed under the spell of this so-called devilish siren, it would be a capricious royal visit.

Glinda's plan was both challenging and dangerous, but she wished to prevent a civil war, not provoke one. She would have to choose those to go with her with the utmost care and caution.

"But you're going," Sam said one day to her stepsister, Elleanora, when they were riding together out in the meadow where she could ask her sister without her mother around. "You need me by your side."

Elle grimaced and looked at Sam with a furrowed brow. "I knew you'd feel this way. And so does Mother . . .," Elle hesitated and continued, "She knows you want to be a mounted soldier in her army.

But now is not the time.”

“If not now, then when?” Sam growled under her breath.

“I don’t know,” Elle replied honestly, shrugging her shoulders and trying to keep the conversation light, even though she knew Sam wouldn’t let it go.

“I’m ready,” Sam continued, raising her voice. “You know I’m ready!”

“Mother wants you here. You can throw as many tantrums as you like, but you’re not going, and that’s the end of it!”

“I’m not throwing a tantrum,” Sam protested loudly. She dropped her head, rubbed her eyes with the palms of her hands, then lowered and slowed her voice to a softer, gentler tone. “I’m just saying that I know that you know I’m ready.” Then she looked at her sister with pleading eyes. “You could talk to Mother. You could convince her.”

Elle knew Sam was ready, but she also knew their mother had a reason for everything she did. So Elle ignored Sam and hoped to change the subject by saying, “There’s been a new rumor. People have said they’ve seen dragons.”

“Are you sure? Where?” Sam questioned quickly, a look of surprise etched across her brow. “Dragons in Oz? That can’t be true.”

“It’s what I was told. One of the small villages on the southwestern border of Quadling. A village named Blackwood.”



Elle was beautiful, with her emerald-green skin glistening in the sunlight and her bright-red hair curled and pinned into a glossy, braided, regal tiara. Her naturally glowing ruby-red lips needed no painting. She carried the sweet scent of cinnamon, Sam’s favorite spice. Maybe it was her green skin that made her smell so delicious, but Sam thought it was more about the close bond they shared. She could always tell when Elle was close by, and that is why Elle never won at hide-and-seek when they were children—the cinnamon gave her away.

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