

The SPORES of OZ



Ellis

The **SPORES** of **OZ**

By Sam Ellis

Based on

The Works of L. FRANK BAUM
Co-authored via ReTell™

ReTell™
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Table of Contents

Chapter 1

The Sky Was Still Soft 1

Chapter 2

The Root of Dreams 5

Chapter 3

The Drums Without Sound 9

Chapter 4

Where the Air Spoke Back 13

Chapter 5

The Bird That Would Not Sing 17

Chapter 6

One Feather Hidden 21

Chapter 7

Straw and Silver 25

Chapter 8

Spores and Spoils 29

Chapter 9

The Word That Was Waiting 33

Chapter 10

The Root That Remains 37



Chapter 1 | The Song Beneath the Hills

Mallow Grubb was good with mushrooms, especially the ones that hummed.

Not many in the Munchkin Valley knew the difference between a whisper-fungus and a full-throated chantcap, but Mallow did. He could pick them in pitch-darkness by feel and hum the tune that made their spore-puffs dance like tiny lanterns. His cellar under the blue-dome farmhouse was warm and mossy, lit with jars of glow-root and bundles of honeytassel drying overhead.

He was a simple Munchkin — short, broad in the shoulders, and quick to blush. Most mornings he delivered mushroom bundles to the market square, where the other vendors shouted about talking turnips and slippers that shined themselves. Mallow didn't shout. He just laid out his foraged bundles on leafwoven mats and waited, quietly, for the right customer.

Today was different.

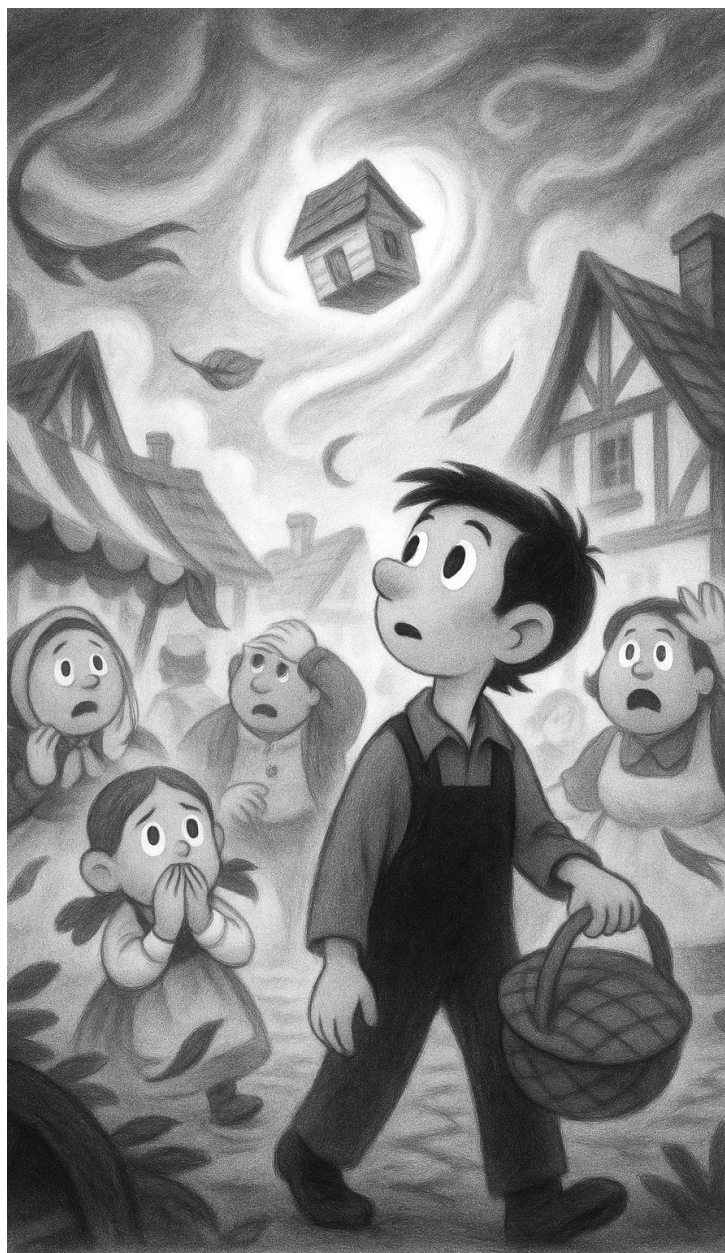
He had found something unusual just before dawn, halfway down Badger Gully — a mushroom that wasn't in any book. Its cap was deep red, speckled with pale silver stars that seemed to twinkle even in shade. It didn't sing. It pulsed.

He hadn't dared cut it.

Instead, he wrapped it in a bed of moss and kept it near his heart as he walked to market, unsure why his hands were shaking.

What he didn't know — what no Munchkin knew — was that Dorothy Gale had landed in Oz that very morning. And far across the fields, a Wicked Witch had just turned toward the west with a snarl, sensing that something precious had gone out of balance.

And it had begun.



Chapter 2 | Something Stirs in the Basket

Mallow tucked the red-starry mushroom deep inside a basket of chantcaps and fluffbloom, packed moss tight around it, and tied the lid down with a cord of sap-twine. It wasn't fear exactly. Just... an ache in his chest that told him not to make noise around it. Not yet.

Besides, there were errands to run. The baker in Clatterwell wanted six chantcaps for her glowing rolls. Mr. Gribble's goat had eaten a sourroot again and needed sporewater to settle its stomach. Normal things. Mallow liked normal.

But the moment he stepped into the bustle of Pebble Court, the normal bent.

A breeze kicked up — strange, dry. It stirred the hems of aprons and twisted wind-chimes in disharmonious notes. Mallow's basket bumped against his hip like something inside had grown restless.

And then: a shriek from the sky.

Everyone looked up.

A streak of color whirled overhead, so fast and high it barely left a shadow. But Mallow saw it. A girl — or something like a girl — in gingham blue and white, clinging to a spinning wooden house like a child might clutch a kite string in a storm.

Then: thunder. A distant boom. A jolt in Mallow's knees, though the ground stayed steady.

The mushroom in the basket gave off one soft, bright pulse.

It wasn't safe anymore. Not just the mushroom — *nothing* was. He didn't know what he'd just seen, but he knew, in that odd way that foragers sometimes do, that it would lead to one of two places: transformation... or ruin.

And the mushroom? It pulsed again.



Chapter 3 | The House with Silver Roots

Mallow ran.

His feet pounded down the winding blue-brick paths, past startled Munchkins and overturned carts of beetle-jam and broomberry. The wind carried the sharp, unfamiliar scent of Kansas wood — foreign, dry, and storm-tossed. He didn't know where Kansas was, but he'd know that smell forever now. It had a loneliness in it.

He reached the edge of the clearing just as the crowd began to gather.

The house sat at a crooked angle, two corners buried in soft earth. Its windows were cracked, shutters snapped back. A little dog barked once, bravely, from behind the door.

But it wasn't the house that caught Mallow's breath.

It was the pair of legs sticking out from beneath it.

Wrinkled. Twisted. Shod in gleaming **silver shoes** that sparkled even in shadow. Mallow gasped. That wasn't a house that had fallen — it was **judgment**.

“She’s gone!” someone whispered. “The Wicked Witch of the East!”

The murmurs turned to shouts. Some cheered. Some wept. Mallow stood frozen.

And then — before his eyes — the silver shoes **shivered**, and the feet beneath them **curled in on themselves** like dead leaves at the end of summer. The shoes popped free and clattered onto the dirt.

Mallow didn't think. He stepped forward.

But someone else beat him to them.

A girl.

She was young — barely more than a child, but there was storm-magic around her like static. She bent, picked up the shoes, and held them like something sacred. Her dog trotted to her side, as if confirming what she already knew.

And behind them, three figures emerged from the trees.

One of them shimmered faintly in the sun. A woman, cloaked in stars.

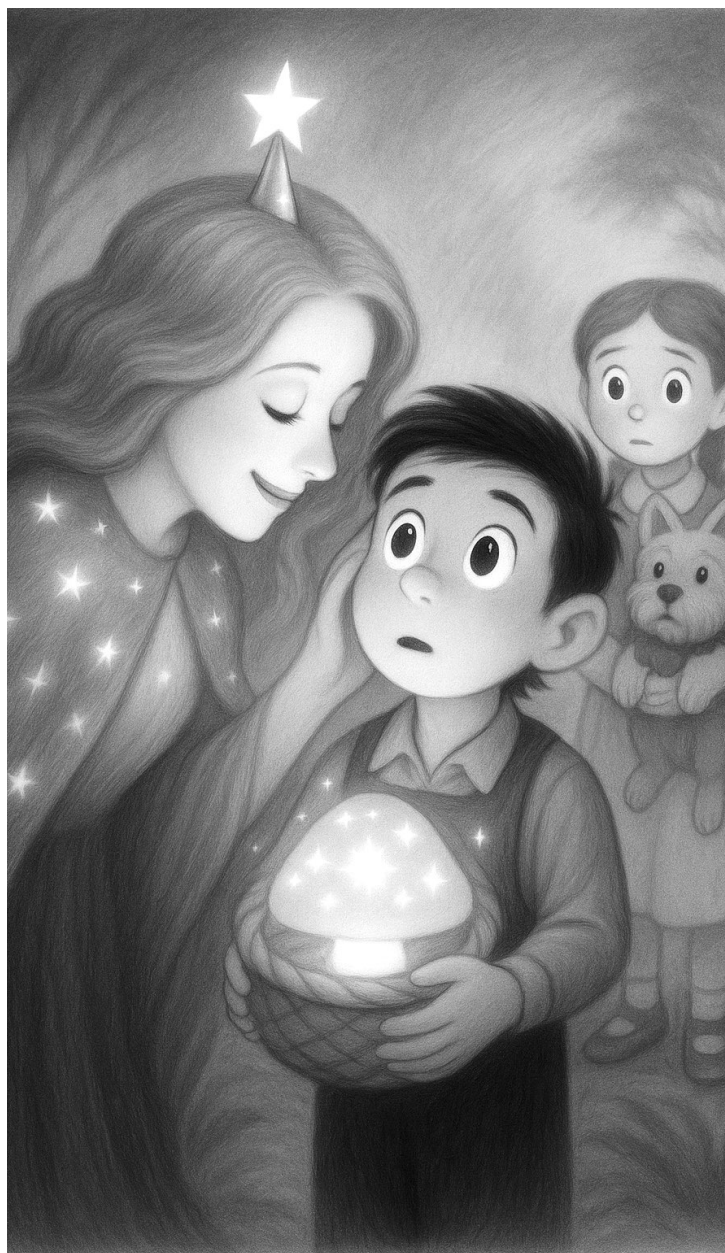
“A sorceress,” someone breathed.

Mallow stepped back, clutching the basket to his chest.

The mushroom inside was **glowing** now.

Whatever was happening here... he was tied to it. Somehow.
The mushroom. The girl. The shoes.

And maybe, just maybe, there was a reason he had found it.



Chapter 4 | The Witch's Nose Knows

Glinda's back was to him when he crossed the soft earth of the crash site, but she turned before his boots made a sound.

Her eyes were pale and bright as lightning, and they held Mallow still like pins in cork. Her face was kind — but not *safe*.

Dorothy glanced over, curious. Toto growled once, but Glinda lifted a hand and all fell quiet.

“You carry something strange,” she said, voice calm but edged. “Let me see.”

Mallow untied the moss lid and opened the basket.

The mushroom pulsed, once.

Then again.

Glinda's expression shifted. Not surprise — no — but recognition. And something deeper. Sorrow?

“That’s no Oz-mushroom,” she said softly.

Dorothy leaned closer. “It’s glowing!”

“It sings,” Mallow said before he could stop himself. “But not out loud. I found it in Badger Gully, day before the cyclone came.”

Glinda reached toward it — then paused.

“No,” she whispered. “It’s still listening.”

“To what?” Dorothy asked.

Glinda’s fingers curled over the basket rim, but she didn’t touch the mushroom. “To the earth. To the part beneath. To something that’s waking now that the East is broken.”

Mallow’s voice came out thin: “Is it... bad?”

Glinda’s smile was not reassuring. “It depends who feeds it.”

She stepped back and looked him over, boots to brow.

“Will you carry it?” she asked. “Not just hold it — *carry* it. Across this turning time. Into the West, if need be.”

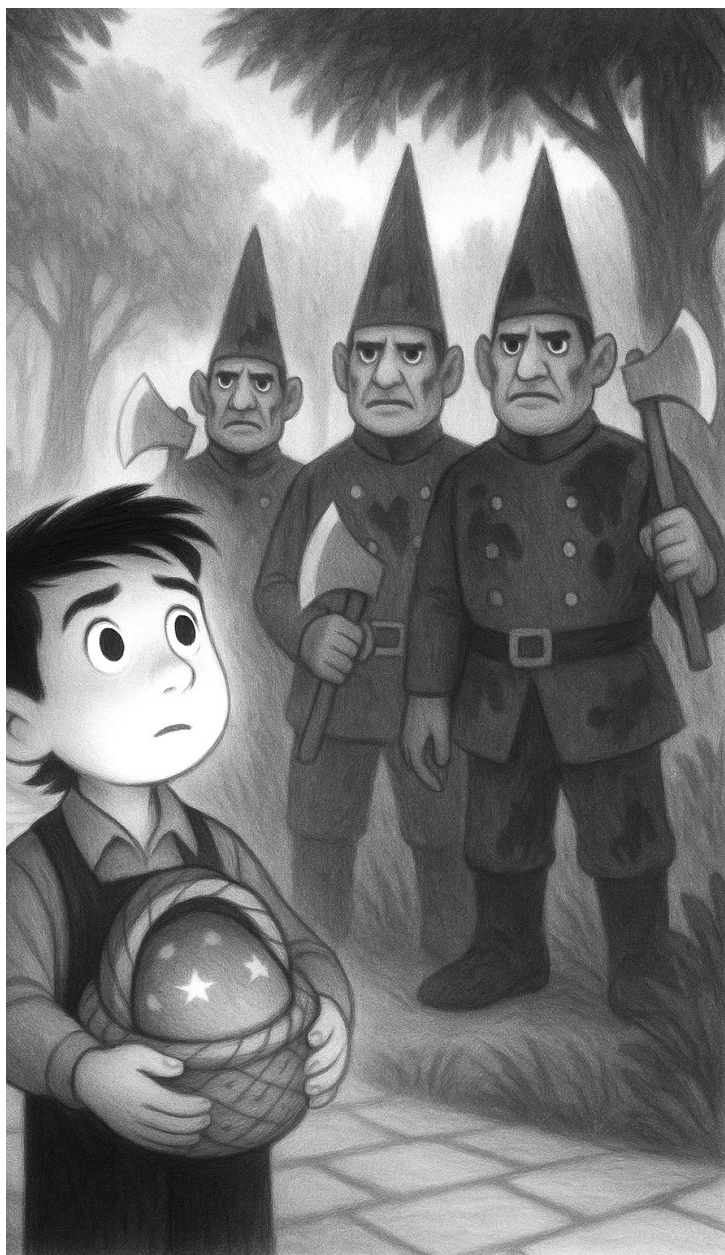
Mallow blinked. “I... I’m a mushroom picker.”

“Aren’t we all,” Glinda said, eyes twinkling. “Say yes.”

Mallow nodded.

And something behind his heart unfurled — a feeling like warm earth being stirred after long frost.

Glinda bowed. Dorothy stared. And the mushroom pulsed again.



Chapter 5 | The Word That Waits

Glinda leaned close — so close Mallow felt the chill of her stars against his cheek.

“This is not a spell,” she said quietly, “but a *seed*.”

And then she whispered it.

The syllables were soft but strange, like wind moving through hollow stone, or the hush between thunder and rain. They tickled Mallow’s ears and vanished the moment they arrived — but he felt them settle behind his teeth, *ready*.

“When you speak it aloud,” Glinda warned, “it will not unspeak. Use it once. Only once. It will change one thing — no more, no less.”

Mallow swallowed. His tongue tingled.

Dorothy looked curious, but Glinda stood straight and turned to her. “You must go. West lies waiting. And East lies fallen.”

Dorothy nodded, still clutching the silver shoes. The little dog gave Mallow a final sniff and a huff.

They departed. The Witch, the Girl, the Shoes.

Mallow stood alone beside the house-that-fell, basket warm against his chest.

And then — a sound behind him.

A voice. Sharp. Rusty.

“Well now. *What have we here?*”

He turned. Three **Winkies** stood in the treeline, armor still soot-streaked, axes slung low. Remnants of the Witch’s broken guard. But without her to bind them, they seemed uncertain — twitchy. Dangerous.

They’d seen the mushroom.

And Mallow.

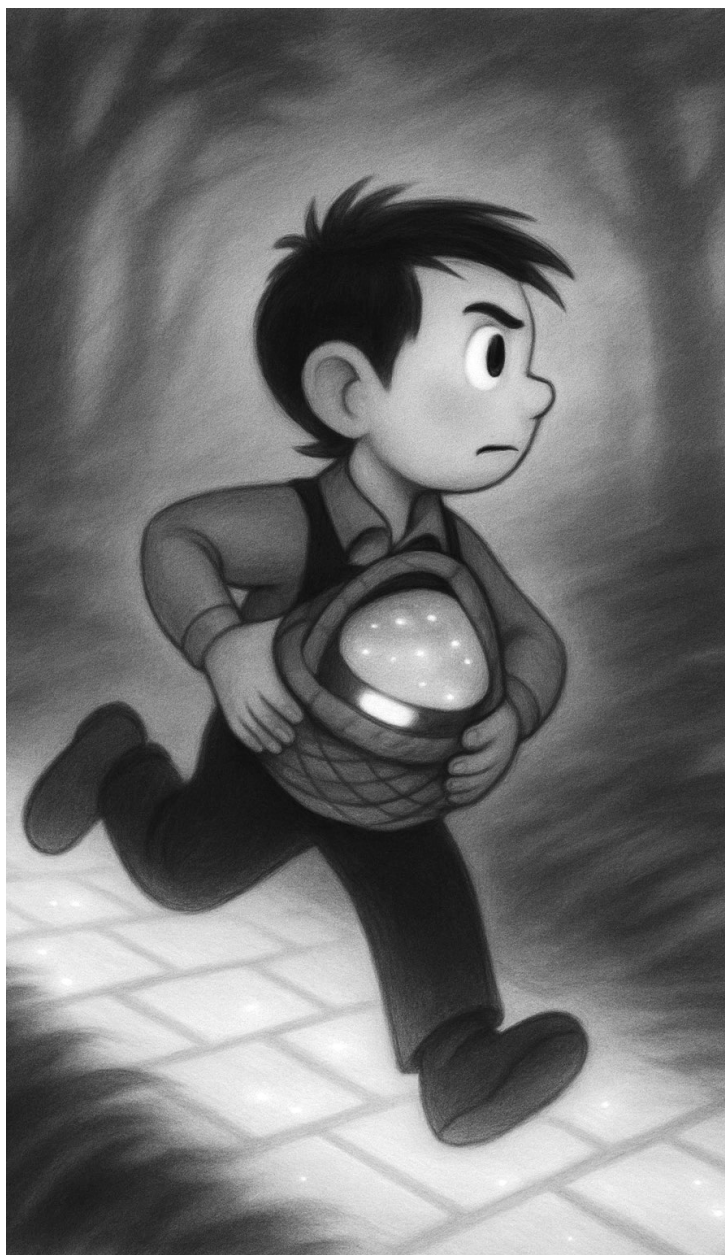
“Well, forager,” one sneered, “looks like you’ve got something left worth guarding.”

Another stepped forward, grip tightening on his hilt. “What say we lighten your basket?”

Mallow’s heart hammered.

He could run. He could bluff. Or...

...he could speak the word.



Chapter 6 | Flight Along the Yellow

Mallow turned on his heel and ran.

The basket thumped against his back as he sprinted toward the ridge, breath snagging in his chest. Behind him, the Winkies shouted and crashed through the brush. One of them cursed. Another whooped.

He leapt a root, slid down a patch of shale, and hit the lower road — not the market path, but the **Old Yellow Road**, worn from generations of boots, wheels, and long-forgotten spells.

And it was humming.

The bricks beneath him shimmered faintly — a soft, golden light just under the surface, as if they remembered the shoes that had passed not an hour ago. Dorothy's shoes. Her path.

Mallow bolted onto it.

The Winkies hesitated at the edge.

“Witch road, this,” one muttered. “Cursed by the green girl.”

Another spat. “Cursed or not, he’s got the shroom.”

But they didn’t follow. Not yet. Not with that shine in the stone.

Mallow kept running.

The mushroom vibrated against his ribs — not frightened. Almost... guiding him?

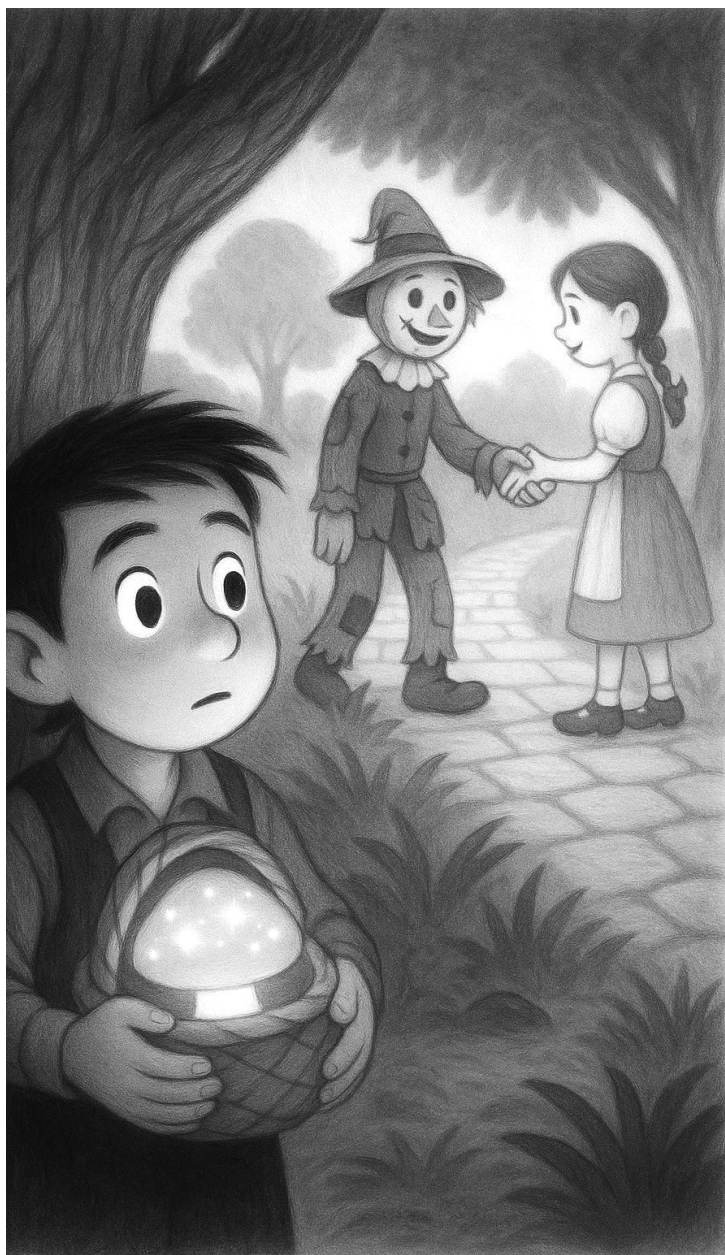
The forest fell away to sloped meadows, and the sky stretched wide. He saw windmills in the distance, smoke curling from a distant cookfire. And further still — glinting faintly — **the Emerald City**.

He wasn’t sure how long he’d been running before he saw the figure ahead.

Tall. Thin. Head like a sack.

A scarecrow.

And walking beside it, a girl in blue.



Chapter 7 | Straw and Silver

Mallow crouched in a patch of blueleaf ferns at the edge of the road, just close enough to hear the voices drifting back on the breeze.

The girl — Dorothy — walked with a skip in her step, her silver shoes catching sunlight like mirrors. Beside her, the scarecrow moved with gangly grace, like a marionette learning to dance.

“...and you have no brains at all?” Dorothy was asking.

“None to speak of,” the Scarecrow replied cheerfully. “But I don’t much miss them. I’ve never had a headache.”

Dorothy laughed, and even from a distance Mallow could feel the warmth in it. She wasn’t like the witches — even Glinda. She was lighter, somehow. Ordinary and extraordinary at once.

The mushroom in Mallow’s basket vibrated softly. Approvingly.

He watched them help one another across a broken stretch of brick, then sit beside a fence and share a bit of fruit. He watched Toto dig at the dirt and bark at clouds.

Mallow's heart pinched — not in pain, but in longing.

These were not soldiers. Not sorcerers. Just a girl and her odd companions on a path through the impossible.

But *everything* around them bent to let them pass — birds sang where they stepped, trees leaned to shade them.

And Mallow knew. **Their path was his path.**

Not yet — but soon.

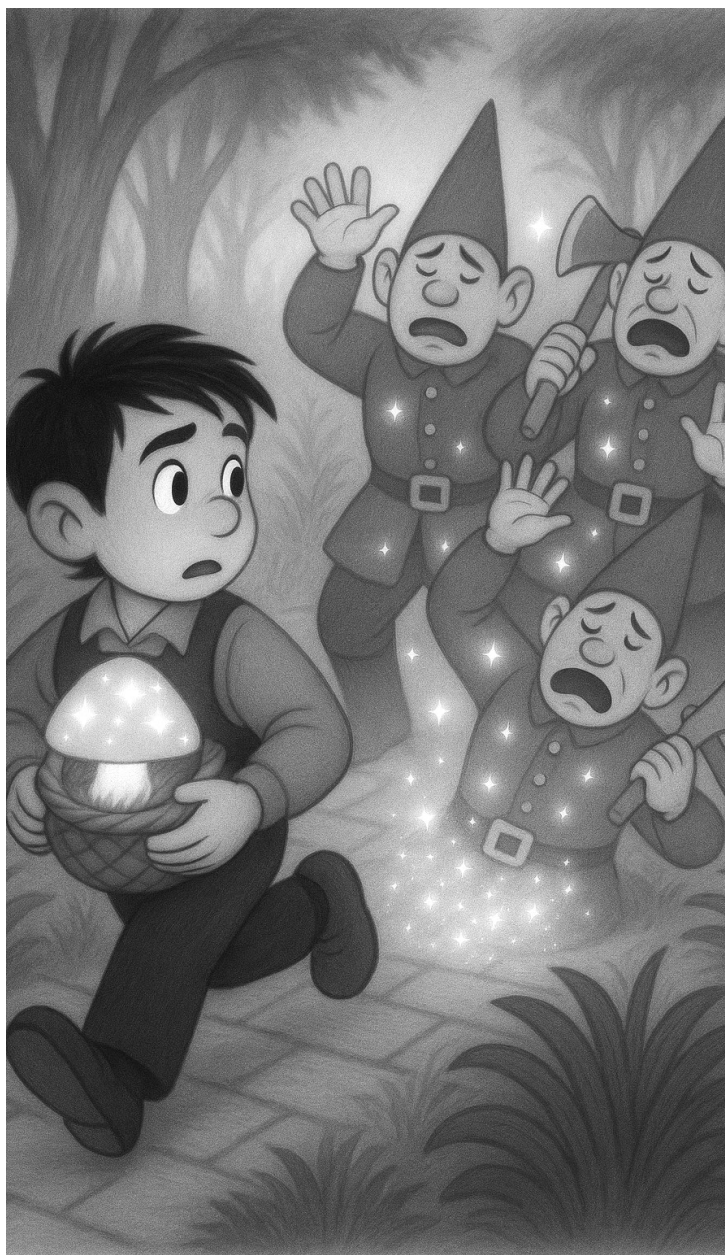
He needed one more sign. A moment. A reason.

And then he saw it.

Far behind them, just at the bend in the road: **smoke.**

The Winkies were following. Slowly. But surely.

And they weren't coming to talk.



Chapter 8 | Spores and Spoils

Mallow crept back along the yellow-brick path, stepping lightly, breath held.

The Winkies had reached the bend now — three of them, armor patched with old green cloth, weapons clumsy but sharp. They moved like men without orders — just hunger. Maybe for revenge. Maybe for something worse.

But they didn't see him.

Mallow slipped into the underbrush and reached into his forager's belt, fingers brushing past starlit sprigs and crinklecap twine. He needed something *strong*.

He pulled out a **pouch of Spindlespore** — a mushroom that released clouds of shimmering powder when agitated. Normally used to distract Snapgulls or lull crab-snails into stillness.

But it had another use, too — one the old underhill teachers rarely mentioned.

He crushed the pouch between two stones and tossed the clump into the path just as the Winkies rounded the bend.

Puff.

A cloud of sparkling spores exploded upward — pale gold and luminous, catching the light like fireflies.

The Winkies stopped.

“Don’t breathe it in!” one barked. Too late.

The lead one staggered, eyes wide.

“Where’s the sky gone—?”

Then they all froze. Not asleep. Not stunned.

Confused.

One dropped his axe and tried to catch the floating spores like butterflies. Another began laughing. The third spun in place and sat down hard, muttering about frogs that weren’t there.

It would wear off — but not quickly.

Mallow exhaled and backed away, heart pounding. He turned and sprinted to catch up with Dorothy and the Scarecrow.

But he wasn’t alone.

A rustle to the left. A flutter of wings.

Then, from a branch just above the trail: **a crow.**

But not an ordinary one.

Its feathers shimmered blue-black, and its eyes held depth — like a well.

“You shouldn’t have done that,” it croaked.

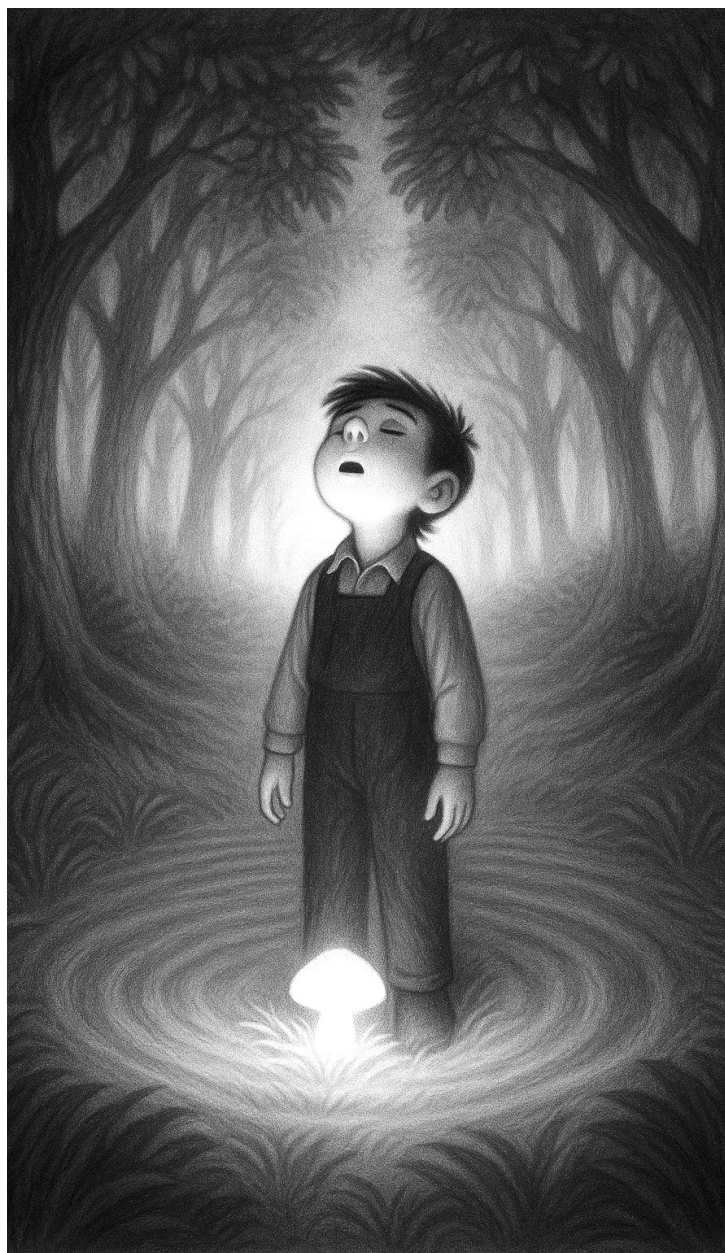
Mallow froze. “Done what?”

The crow tilted its head. “They were only meat. Now they’ll remember you. You’ve made your mark.”

It spread its wings.

“The West sees.”

Then it was gone.



Chapter 9 | The Word That Was Waiting

Mallow stood alone in the hush after the crow's warning, the path behind him choked with glittering spores, the sky holding its breath.

And he spoke it.

The Word Glinda gave him.

It came not from his throat, but *through* him — as if the mushroom in the basket had rooted a tendril into his ribs and tugged the syllables free.

It wasn't loud.

It didn't need to be.

The trees heard it first.

Leaves curled. Branches quivered. Moss drew back from the roots.

Then the air rippled — like water under moonlight — and everything *stilled*.

The glowroot in his pack lit up, unbidden. The mushroom pulsed, but softer now, as if... listening.

Far behind him, the three Winkies — still fogged from the spores — stopped.

Then turned.

Then ran.

Not from fear.

From *remembrance*.

Because Mallow Grubb had just spoken something very old — a word not from witches or wizards, but from the First Soil, the place where magic had not yet chosen sides.

A word of *marking*.

A word that meant:

This one matters.

Somewhere in the distance, a weather vane spun in the wrong direction.

Somewhere deeper, under stone, a forgotten door began to groan open.

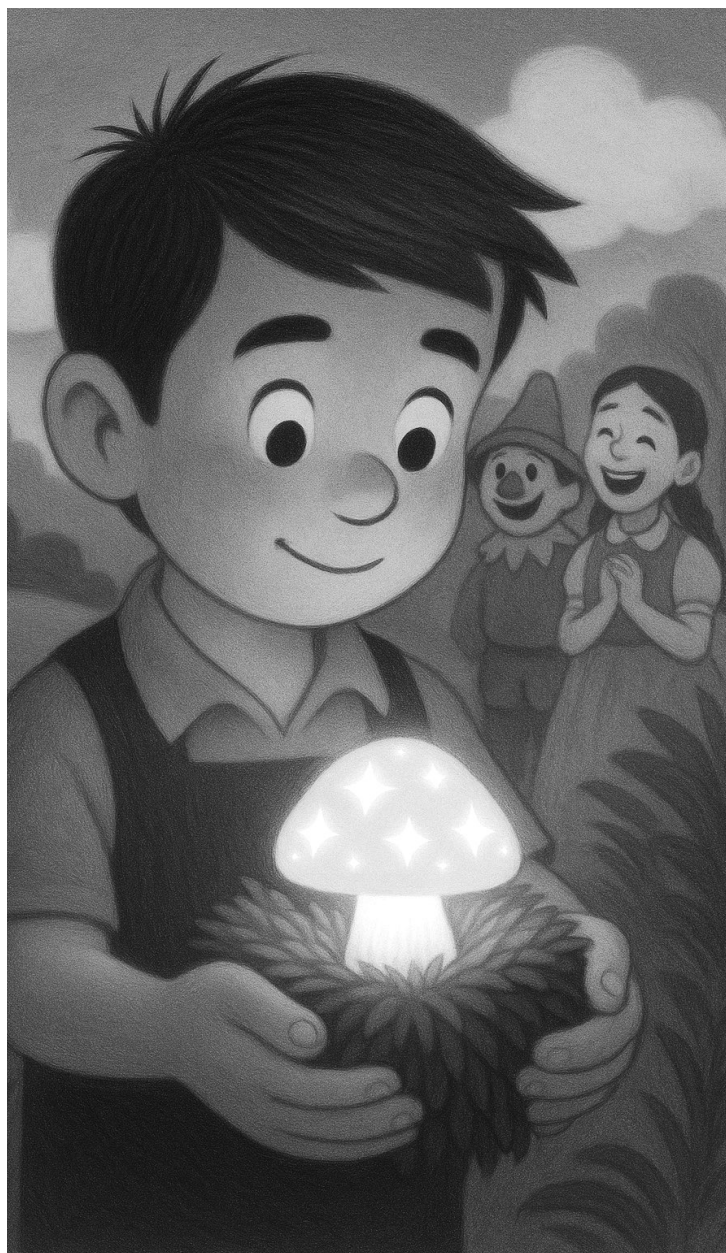
Mallow felt it all — and fell to one knee, gasping.

When he looked up, the Scarecrow and Dorothy were staring at him from the road ahead.

Dorothy held Toto close.

The Scarecrow blinked, then gave a crooked smile.

“Well,” he said. “You’re a curious sort of companion.”



Chapter 10 | The Root That Remains

The three of them sat around a morning campfire — Dorothy, the Scarecrow, and Mallow — eating roasted crowberries and toast-crumbs from Dorothy's pack. Toto had finally stopped growling at Mallow's basket.

They hadn't asked many questions — not yet.

Dorothy only said, "Glinda gave you something, didn't she?" Mallow nodded.

"Did it help?"

He looked down at his hands, then at the mushroom, still warm and glowing.

"Yes," he said. "But it changed something, too."

The Scarecrow poked the fire with a stick. "That's how you know it was real."

They traveled together now, at least for a while. The Tin Woodman wasn't far ahead, and they'd need Mallow's knack for finding clean water and calming wild berries that tried to bite. He wasn't a hero — not like Dorothy, not like the lion everyone kept whispering about — but he was useful.

And more than that — he was *marked*.

Birds landed near him that never showed themselves. Trees whispered when he passed. Even the bricks under his boots sometimes shifted to smooth his way.

But it wasn't all gift.

Each night, when the others slept, Mallow felt the mushroom pulse faintly.

And on the third night, it whispered to him in a dream.

Not words.

Just an image.

A door — somewhere beneath the Emerald City — opening slowly, stone scraping against stone, something old waking in the dark. Something that knew the Word he had spoken.

And knew *him* now.

When he awoke, the mushroom was still glowing.

He tucked it deeper into his pack.

And kept walking.

Mallow Grubb had left his hill, his roots, his old road behind.

But under his skin, the soil of Oz was still shifting.

And far below the Emerald towers...

...the mushroom was not the only thing that had heard the Word.

The End

(for now)

Thank You for Reading

We hope you enjoyed The SPORES of OZ, a secret story whispered between the pages of L. Frank Baum's timeless world.

If this tale sparked wonder, there are more legends waiting behind the Emerald Curtain—stories of hidden heroes, curious creatures, and the quiet magic that stirs when no one's looking.

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The SPORES of OZ

Mallow Grubb is a soft-hearted forager who prefers roots and mushrooms to magic and mayhem. But when a strange red mushroom pulses beneath his fingertips and a house falls from the sky, Mallow finds himself swept into a parallel adventure — one that runs alongside the girl from Kansas, but dives deep into the soil of Oz itself.

Entrusted with a living relic, shadowed by broken Winkie guards, and watched by a talking crow who may not be friend or foe, Mallow must uncover what his mushroom carries — and what it means to be marked by magic older than witches or wizards.

This is **not** the story of a great hero.

It's the story of the one who listened.



*While Dorothy Gale followed the
Yellow Brick Road, someone else was
listening beneath it.*