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The Enchanted Palace

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In the village of Altos Ares in the island of Terceira there lived once upon a time a fair maid who had been baptized Perola, which means Pearl. As she grew older she was indeed like a rare pearl among the other maidens of the village, so great was the charm of her unusual beauty. She was the joy of her home and of the whole community for her disposition was as lovely as her face.

One bright spring morning Perola leaned over the cistern where she had gone to get water. Her reflection showed so plainly in the water that she paused to gaze into the smiling eyes of her own mirrored face. As she did so a magic spell was woven about her. The water fairy who had come to the cistern had seen her great beauty and had thrown a charm over her. In a moment more she fell into the cistern to join her reflection there.

When Perola could not be found there was great excitement in the little village. Nobody could guess what had become of her. Her mother prayed devoutly for her safety in the church of St. Roque. All the villagers sought for her in every possible place.

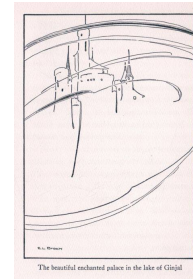
Now at the north of the island of Terceira there are groups of tiny rocks in the sea which are called the Biscoitos or biscuits. Here there lived a wise old woman who had a great reputation among all the people of the island for her knowledge.

"Let us go to consult the wise woman of Biscoitos," said one of the village youths when they had sought long and faithfully for a trace of the hiding-place into which Perola might have vanished.

Accordingly, the young men of Altos Ares went to the wise woman, and this is what she told them:

"The fair pearl of your village is safe from the fishers of pearls. She is hidden away in an enchanted palace of marble and ivory and tortoise-shell and mother-of-pearl."

The water fairy had taken Perola through an underground passage which led from the cistern to the beautiful enchanted palace in the lake of Ginjal. There she was kept in hiding. The fairies never dreamed that anybody would ever be able to guess where she was.



Now, with the words of the wise woman of Biscoitos to guide them, the youths of Altos Ares organized an expedition to search for their lost playmate. The sons of the magistrate, the rich men, the learned men of the island of Terceira joined this expedition. They searched through the whole island for a place where an enchanted palace might be located.

At last, upon St. John's Day when the days and nights are of equal length, this band of the brave youths of Terceira came to the shores of Lake Ginjal in the interior of the island.

"This is surely the enchanted place. Here in this lake must lie the fairies' palace of marble and ivory and tortoise shell and mother-of-pearl!" somebody cried.

"How shall we be able to approach this magic palace and rescue Perola?" asked one.

"How shall we be able to break her enchantment?" asked another.

"Let us camp here upon the border of the lake and consider how best to proceed," said the leader of the expedition.

Now at that very hour on St. John's Day the mother of Perola was in the church of St. Roque in Altos Ares praying devoutly for her daughter's safe return.

Suddenly she heard a strange voice. These were the words which fell upon her ears:

"Your prayers and the perseverance of the youths of the island have at last triumphed. Go in peace. On the day of St. Peter at the hour of sunset your daughter shall be restored to you. Her enchantment shall be broken and she shall be brought to the bank of Lake Ginjal in a boat of ivory, drawn by a snow-white swan."

When the youths encamped upon the shore of the lake heard these tidings they set up such a shout of joy that it was indeed enough to break any enchantment.

At the time appointed Perola was brought to the bank of the lake in a boat of ivory drawn by a snow-white swan, just as fair and lovely as upon the day when she had vanished from the little village of Altos Ares.

This is the story of the Lake of Ginjal. It is quite probable that the enchanted

palace of the water fairies is still there.

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