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The White Swan

Maud Lindsay

The white porcelain swan, which looked as if it had come straight from fairyland, was sent to two little sisters by their godmother. Of course, the first thing they wanted to do was to put it in water and see it float. So Nurse filled a big flowered wash-bowl for them and set it on the nursery floor. "Don't get yourselves wet," she said as she went out of the room. The water in the bowl was clear and shining, and the painted flowers around the edge looked beautiful.

"We can call it Wash-Bowl Pond, and I'll put the white swan in it right now," said the larger of the children.

But that was just what the little one wanted to do.

"You do everything," she said. "And the white swan is as much mine as it is yours."

"Of course," said the other; "but I'm taller than you, and older. You might drop the swan and break it."

"You broke your dolls," said the little sister.

"Yes, but that was because I tripped up. I'll be sure to look where I'm going when I have the white swan," said the little girl who thought herself so old. "Anyway, it is my time to be first, for you rang the door-bell when we went to see Grandma, and I wanted to do that as much as you did."

She took the white swan from the table and held it so high that the little sister could not reach it, though she tried very hard; and the next thing they knew, the white swan lay on the floor broken into a dozen pieces.

"You pushed," said one child.

"You pulled," said the other. And then, because they were sorry, and ashamed, too, they put their arms around each other and began to cry.

Nurse came hurrying in at the very first sound, and when she saw and heard what had happened she said:

"If a white swan makes you quarrel like that, I'm glad I'm not going to have one in my nursery."

But when Mother heard about it and saw how sorry the children were, she said:

"All the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again when he had a fall, but I will see what I can do for the white swan."

That very day she glued the broken pieces together so carefully that when she had finished, the children thought the white swan was as beautiful as it had been before.

But it never could float in Wash-Bowl Pond nor anywhere else. The best that Mother and the children could do was to make a lake like the one in the Toy Shop with a piece of looking-glass; and there the white swan sat.

The children could look at it, but they could not play with it; and if ever they began to be cross with each other, Nurse was sure to say:

"Remember the white swan."



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