

The Magic Lake at the End of the World

A Story from Ecuador

Adapted by Barbara Klocek

I have found this is a wonderful story in the spring for the older girls who may be anxious about the transitions to first grade. It makes a lovely puppet show and play

Once upon a time the king of a great land had one son who brought him great joy, but also sorrow. The prince had been born in ill health and as the years passed, no one could find a cure for him. One night the king prayed, "Oh, Great One, I am getting old and will soon leave my people to join you in the heavens. There is no one to look after them but my son, the prince. Please tell me how he can be cured." The king waited for an answer and then heard a voice from the fire that burned always by the altar. "When the prince drinks water from the magic lake at the end of the world, he will be well."

But the king was too old to make the long journey himself, and the prince was too ill, so he proclaimed over his land that who so ever would bring back the water from the lake at the end of the world would be richly rewarded. Many brave men set out to try, but none could find it. In a far valley of that kingdom, lived a poor farmer with his wife, two sons and a daughter. One day the older son said, "Let my brother and I search for the healing water. We shall return before the moon is full to help with the harvest." The second son also wanted to go but the father feared for them. Then his wife said, "We must help our king and prince." The father gave his blessing and the sons set out on their journey.

They traveled far and found many lakes, but none where the sky touched the waters. Finally they knew they must return to help their father. Said the brothers, "Let us gather water from every lake. In this way we may receive a reward." When they returned to the palace they told the king that they had brought water from the magic lake. When the prince was given the water he remained as ill as before. The king called for his magician to ask why the prince was not made well. The magician said wisely that this was not the water from the magic lake. The brothers trembled with fright for they knew their falsehood had been discovered. The king angrily threw them into prison and every day they had to drink their false water.

Once again the king pleaded for help from his people. Suma, the little sister of the brothers, was tending her flock of llamas when she heard the royal messenger. She quickly led her llamas home and begged her parents to let he go. "You are too young," said her father, "Besides, look what has befallen you brothers." And her mother added, "We cannot bear to be without our dear Suma." "But think how sad our king will be if his son dies," replied Suma, "And if I find the lake, perhaps the king will forgive my brothers." "Dear husband, perhaps it is the will of the gods," said her mother, and they gave her their blessing.

Bravely Suma set off with her pet llama to carry her provisions, a bag of golden corn and a flask of water. The first night she slept, snug and warm against her llama. But during the night she heard the cry of the mountain lion and so in the morning she sent her llama home for safety. The next night she slept in the top branches of a tall tree. In the morning she was aroused by the voices of the gentle birds resting on a nearby branch. They were talking about how she had shared her corn with them yesterday and how she would never be able to find the magic lake. "Let us help her," said one sparrow. "Oh, yes. Please do!" said Suma. "We shall help you for you are a good child. Each of us will give you a special wing feather and you must hold them all together in one hand as a fan. These feathers have magic powers that will carry you wherever you wish to go. They will also protect you from harm." Each bird carefully gave her a special feather. She made a little fan and tied them with a ribbon from her hair. The oldest bird told her how three terrible creatures guarded the magic lake. She should have no fear for she would not be harmed if she held up the magic fan and sang this song. (See below.) Suma gratefully thanked the birds and, holding the fan said, "Please

take me to the magic lake at the end of the world.” At once, a soft breeze lifted her out of the tree and through the valley. Up she was carried and over the snowy peaks. At last the wind put her down on the shore of a lake touched by the sky. She ran to the water and was about to fill her flask when a large crab said, “Get away from my lake or I will eat you.” Trembling only a little, Suma held up the magic fan and sang this song, “No fear here. Angel stand near.” At once the crab closed his eyes and fell asleep.

Once more she began to fill her bottle, when a voice came from the water. “Get away from my lake or I shall eat you;” She saw a great green alligator in the lake. Quickly she held up the fan and sang and the creature sank to the bottom of the lake, asleep. As Suma recovered from her fright, she heard a whistling voice, “Get away from my lake or I will eat you.” She looked up and saw a flying serpent. Again Suma’s fan and song saved her from harm. The serpent drifted to the ground, folded its wings, and began to snore. Suma sat for a moment to quiet herself. Then she realized the danger was past and filled up her flask.

Holding her fan, she whispered, “Please take me to the palace.” Swiftly she flew and found herself before the gate. A guard led her to the prince who was pale and motionless. When Suma gave him a few drinks, he sat up and said joyfully, “How strong I feel.”

The king and queen rejoiced. They praised her courage and offered her all the riches of the kingdom. She said that she had only three wishes. The first was that the fan be returned to the birds and it immediately flew out of the window toward the mountains. The second wish was that her brothers be freed. Immediately the king had them released. The last wish was for a large farm with many llamas for her parents. “It will be so,” said the king. “Will you not stay with us in the palace? We will do everything to make you happy.” “Oh, no, thank you,” said Suma. “I miss my family and wish to return to them.” And so she returned home and lived happily with her parents and brothers and their llamas.

Song: A D A A B G A No fear here. Angel stand near.